

**TURKISH STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF U.S. CULTURE:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR TARGET CULTURE LEARNING**

**A THESIS PRESENTED BY  
ESRA ÖZOĞUL**

**TO THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**SILKENT UNIVERSITY**

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## ABSTRACT

Title : Turkish Students' Perceptions of U.S.  
Culture: Implications for Target  
Culture Learning

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The current consensus in second and foreign language teaching is that culture is an indispensable part of language that should be a focus in foreign language classrooms. Studies in cross-cultural communication suggest that sensitizing foreign language learners to the target culture reduces misconceptions and misunderstandings and thus enhances cross-cultural communication.

On the basis of these views, this study investigated the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of students who had the experience of living in the U.S. and the perceived needs of students who were taking a language course in Turkey in preparation for further study in the U.S.

Data were collected from three different groups of informants through interviews and questionnaires.

Interviews and the open-ended questions in the questionnaires were analyzed using a coding technique, and quantitative data from the close-ended questionnaire were analyzed in terms of frequencies, percentages and means.

Interviews were held with six returned students, that is, those who had studied in the U.S. and who had returned to Turkey. A hundred and forty-two students who were in the U.S. were sent a semi-structured questionnaire through e-mail, while students in Turkey were given a close-ended questionnaire.

The results of the study indicate inconsistencies in the perceived needs of the students with U.S. experience and those of the students in Turkey. The students with U.S. experience perceived awareness of U.S. culture as their immediate need. The students in Turkey, on the other hand, focussed little beyond considering the U.S. graduate education system.

According to the results of this study, it can thus be concluded that the teaching of U.S. culture to the students in Turkey is of utmost importance, in that it will help them understand, appreciate, and respect the target culture and thus facilitate cross-cultural communication and adjustment to U.S. culture.

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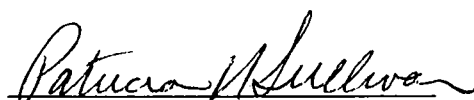
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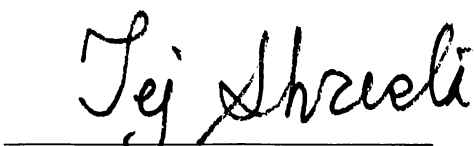
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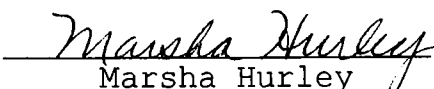
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To My Parents

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

The relationship between language and culture and the impact of socio-cultural elements on communication and foreign language teaching have long been two of the major issues of dispute among experts in EFL.

Language, a complex system of communication, is "primarily a social instrument" and it cannot be separated from the society in which it is used (Seelye, 1988, p.15). More than a set of linguistic structures, language embodies the culture of a particular society. Culture has been defined as "a way of life" (Brown, 1994), "a collection of common values" (Dindi et al., 1989) and "a world view" (Scollon and Scollon, 1989).

All of these perspectives encompass what I believe to be important in a definition of culture. For this study I define culture as follows: A set of values, norms, beliefs, traditions and social behaviors that are shared by all the members of a society and that make one society distinct from another.

Culture imposes a particular world view on the members of a society and each member of a particular society perceives and judges others through the filters of his or her own world view. Hence, when members from different cultures come into contact, communication

breakdown and misunderstandings are likely to occur (Brown, 1994). Not only are these breakdowns in communication due to cultural differences likely, but they are more likely to occur because of cultural differences than linguistic differences and difficulties (Ellis and Roberts 1987, cited in Byram et al., 1994).

Several studies support this view: Flowerdew and Miller's (1995) ethnographic study of second language lectures at a university in Hong Kong illustrates the frustration of both native-speaker lecturers and non-native students of English in lectures, due to their diverse cultural backgrounds.

Another study carried out by Hinkel (1995) shows that the usage of certain linguistic structures (i.e., modal verbs of obligation and necessity) is culture and context dependent. Hinkel (1994) also demonstrates the great diversity between the writing conventions and the interpretation of rhetorical notions of Anglo-American native speakers and non-native speakers from cultures influenced by Confucian thought.

Similarly, in her article, Sherman (1992) explains the poor performance of her Italian students in writing academic essays in English as the result of diverse cultural thought patterns and attitudes.

All these studies suggest that such problems as misconceptions and misunderstandings can be minimized if foreign language learners are made aware of how the fundamental notions and values of the target language culture differ from those of their own culture.

Furthermore, other studies suggest that learners' positive attitudes toward themselves, their own society and toward the target language society enhance their proficiency in the target language. Negative attitudes toward another language and its culture, on the other hand, which may occur due to false stereotyping and excessive ethnocentrism, inhibit language learning (Brown, 1994). Learners' negative attitudes, however, can be changed by helping them understand, appreciate, and respect the target culture as well as their own. Thus, knowledge of the target culture is essential for mutual understanding in cross-cultural communication. Kramsch et al. (1996) reinforce this view stating that culture is an indispensable part of a language and should be taught in foreign language classrooms.

#### Statement of the Problem

The English language is taught as a foreign language in Turkey; that is, it is taught in the learners' own culture "with few immediate and widespread opportunities

to use the language" (Brown, 1994, p.182). The majority of students learn English as part of their university education at English-medium universities, which will eventually enable them to find 'better' or 'very well-paid' jobs. Because of this limited purpose, in my institution, the Department of Basic English (DBE), Middle East Technical University (METU), the teaching of English culture to these students has been neglected - it does not seem to be crucial since there is little chance for the students to interact with native speakers of English outside the classroom.

There is, on the other hand, another group of students at the DBE, METU, who learn the English language in preparation for further studies in the United States of America. Every year the DBE, METU, provides an English course for graduate students who have been awarded a scholarship by the Ministry of Education for further studies in the United States. The primary aim of these courses is to prepare the students for the TOEFL exam, which is the initial requirement for acceptance to universities in the United States. These students come from different parts of Turkey. Some of them have never been abroad and have little knowledge--if any--of U.S. culture. Having little or no awareness of the culture they will soon be exposed to, some of these students are

more susceptible to adjustment difficulties and to a greater degree of culture shock when they are immersed in that culture.

As I am convinced that teaching the target culture along with the target language is crucial, my research concerns this particular group of students, the graduate students at the DBE, METU, who are studying English in preparation for further studies in the U.S.

#### Purpose of the study

My purpose in conducting this study is to explore Turkish students' experiences in the U.S. in terms of cross-cultural adjustment; and the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of the graduate students at the DBE, METU, who will be going to the U.S. for further studies. I have selected this topic as I believe that teaching U.S. culture to these students is of great benefit to them in that it will sensitize them to the differences between their own cultural values and those of American society. As Furnham and Bochner (1986, cited in Byram et al., 1994, p.106) suggest, increased awareness and sensitivity toward the target culture can "help maximize [learners'] perception of what is culturally specific and also minimize 'culture shock'."

### Significance of the Study

This study will highlight the crucial role of the target culture in the language teaching/learning process. It can thus contribute to the enhancement of language courses at the DBE, METU, for students who are going to continue their academic careers in the United States. Helping students gain an awareness of the differences between their own society and those of American society will undoubtedly help students become more proficient in the English language since "a thorough understanding of the language can only be gained by understanding the cultural context which has produced it" (Byram et al., 1994, p.11).

### Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions and sub-questions:

1. What are the experiences, in terms of U.S. culture, of Turkish students who are currently in the United States and who have been to the United States?
  - a. How did these students respond to the differences between U.S. and Turkish culture?
2. What are the perceived needs, in terms of American culture, of the graduate students who



are going to the United States in the near future for further study?

a. What are the perceived needs of the graduate students in terms of personal adjustment to the routines of daily life, such as shopping, getting help and using services, public transport and so on?

b. What are the perceived needs of the graduate students in terms of building and maintaining social relationships with American people?

c. What are the perceived needs of the graduate students in terms of adjusting to the U.S. graduate study education system?

3. Do the perceived needs of the graduate students, in terms of U.S. culture, parallel those of the students who actually experienced living in the United States?

This chapter presented an introduction and the background to the research topic. In chapter 2, the literature relevant to the research topic will be reviewed.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature concerning the crucial role of target culture in the foreign language teaching/learning process in order to provide a conceptual framework for this study. In the first section, definitions and basic characteristics of culture will be presented. The following section will deal with the relationship between language, thought and culture, and their effects on cross-cultural communication. Following arguments for and against the teaching of target culture and selected studies dealing with the role of target culture in EFL/ESL classroom situations, the definition of culture this study is based on will be discussed.

### Some Characteristics and Definitions of Culture

'Culture' is not an easy term that can be ascribed a clear-cut definition. Attempts that have been made by researchers in various fields to define culture have resulted in countless definitions of this term. Some definitions are as follows:

Tylor (1871, cited in Damen, 1987, p.74) defines culture as "a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other

capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

According to Harris and Moran (1979, cited in Damen, 1987 p.74) "culture is the unique life style of a particular group of people... Culture is also communicable knowledge, learned behavioral traits that are shared by participants in a social group and manifested in their institutions and artefacts".

Salzmann (1993) refers to culture as "the total pattern of human learned behavior transmitted from generation to generation"(p.156).

The definition given by Scollon and Scollon (1995) is "any of the customs, world view, language, kinship system, social organization and other taken-for-granted day-to-day practices of people which set that group apart as a distinct group" (p.116).

Hofstede (1991) makes a distinction between what he calls 'culture one' and 'culture two.' 'Culture one' deals with "civilization or refinement of the mind and the results of such refinement like education, art, and literature" (p.5). Hofstede states that 'culture two' deals with "much more fundamental human processes than culture one; it deals with the things that hurt" (p.5). He defines 'culture two' through the metaphor of 'mental software'—"an usually unconscious conditioning which

leaves individuals considerable freedom to think, feel, and act but within the constraints of what his or her social environment offers in terms of thoughts, feelings, and actions" (p.235).

Holliday (1994; 1997) brings forth a different perspective into the notion of culture, stating that the popular usage of culture, which he calls "large culture," refers to "prescribed ethnic, national and international entities (p.1). According to Holliday (1997), the notion of large culture might lead to "otherization," which he defines as "the process whereby the 'foreign' is reduced to a simplistic, easily digestible, exotic or degrading stereotype" (p.6). "Small culture," on the other hand, refers to "any cohesive social grouping" (p.7) such as the classroom group, in which "each member [uses] his or her own culture-making ability to form rules and meanings in collaboration with others" (p.8). He believes that it is more useful to talk about small cultures as they are easier to define and more neutral in terms of national connotations, which makes it "easier to talk about cultures changing and being influenced by each other" (p.6).

Holliday (1997) also distinguishes between small culture and sub-culture. Sub-culture refers to a segment of a culture within a society that has certain

characteristics, behaviors, and values (Nelson, 1975). According to Holliday, sub-culture is part of 'large culture' whereas 'small culture' is separate.

Holliday's justification for concentrating on 'small culture' is to the point. The distinction he makes between 'large culture' and 'small culture' contributes to our understanding of the complexity of the notion of culture. Another important point to which he attracts our attention is the existence of subcultures within one society, which makes it difficult to talk about one uniform culture of a society, and he warns us against making overgeneralizations and forming false stereotypes about different nations.

With the exception of Holliday's 'small culture,' all the above definitions of culture exhibit some common characteristics that are listed by Damen (1987). According to Damen, culture is a universal fact of human life, which provides "blueprints for living" and "accompanying values and beliefs to support these blueprints." Culture and cultural patterns are learned, transmitted through generations, and change in the passage of time. Culture also functions as a filtering device and, finally, it is closely related to language - "culture is transmitted in great part through language;

cultural patterns in turn are reflected in language  
(Damen, 1987, pp.88-89).

These common characteristics suggest that culture is at the core of a society; that it is reflected through people's behaviors, lifestyles, world views and through their language. In other words, these characteristics of culture bring forth the interrelationship between language, culture and thought.

#### The Relationship between Language, Thought and Culture

The extent to which language, culture, and thought have influenced each other, and which is the dominant aspect of communication, have been matters of controversy for three quarters of a century (Valdes, 1986, p.1).

Among the theories on the relationship between language, thought, and culture that have attracted most attention is the Whorf hypothesis. Whorf stated that language is "a shaper of ideas" rather than "a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas" (1956, cited in Cole & Scribner, 1974, p.40). Through the principles of linguistic determinism and of linguistic relativity he sets forth, Whorf states that a person's thought patterns



and world views are determined by the language he or she speaks (cited in Salzmänn, 1993, p.154). This assertion has provoked a large amount of dispute. Other linguists Salzmänn, 1993; Seelye, 1988; Wardhaugh, 1974, in Brown, 1994) have criticized Whorf's hypothesis, as it erroneously implies that cross-cultural understanding and communication is impossible. Farb (1974, cited in Seelye, p.23), for example, maintains that:

The true value of Whorf's theories is not the one he worked so painstakingly to demonstrate - that language tyrannizes speakers by forcing them to think in certain ways. Rather, his work emphasized something of even greater importance: the close alliance between language and the total culture of the speech community.

While Farb (1974) refutes Whorf's hypothesis that language determines the way we think and view the world, he seems to agree with the 'weak' version of Whorf's linguistic determinism principle. In fact, the 'weak' version of Whorf's hypothesis, which states that people's thought patterns are influenced or "guided by" the language they use, is commonly acknowledged. This weak version of the Whorf hypothesis, as Farb pointed out in

the above quotation, articulates the interrelatedness of language and culture.

The current consensus is that language, thought, and culture are interrelated; they are equally important in communication and cannot be considered as operating separately (Valdes, 1986). According to Brown (1994), culture is "an integral part of the interaction between language and thought" since cultural patterns, customs and ways of life as well as culture-specific world views are reflected in language (p.185).

#### Cross-cultural Communication

Considering the fact that people reflect the cultural values of their society through their language, it is not difficult to see the importance of knowledge of the cultural values of different societies in cross-cultural communication. Without a doubt, the role of culture in cross-cultural communication has received increased attention over the past decades. In fact, it has become a widely known fact that language and culture are interwoven and that, in order to communicate effectively, one must be aware of the cultural values of the people with whom one is interacting (Brown, 1994; Furnham, 1994; Smith, 1981).

According to Bentahila & Davies (1989), people are not aware of how their verbal behaviour is determined by the cultural values of the society they live in. They only become aware of this when they are exposed to other languages and cultures and begin to notice the differences. Bentahila and Davies point out that "people may fail to recognize the source of these differences and, may wrongly attribute aspects of people's behavior to their own personalities instead of realizing they are simply conforming to different cultural norms" (p.103).

Another exemplification of the effect of culture on language has been put forward by Smith (1981): He identifies three levels of communication; namely, universal level, professional level, and mundane level (p.220). The universal level is culture-free and refers to the non-verbal dimension of communication such as traffic signs in the streets. The professional level refers to communication between people of the same profession. According to Smith, this level of communication is the easiest to handle since specialists in the same profession share well-defined registers. The mundane level, on the other hand, is the one at which a non-native speaker of English encounters the most problems. Smith describes the mundane level as one that is "concerned with day-to-day activities, and with the

interaction between language users outside their professional circles" (1981, p.221).

In the same vein, Furnham (1994) describes people who are new in a foreign culture or subculture as "socially unskilled" since they have not been "socialized in the rules and routines of behavior pertaining to that society" (p.92). Furnham and Bochner (1982) listed typical day-to-day activities and social situations that cause foreigners the most problems. Some of these situations are: using public transport, shopping in a large supermarket, seeing a doctor, appearing in front of an audience, going into restaurants and cafes, going out with somebody who you are sexually attracted to, and going to a social occasion where there are many people of another national or cultural group to yourself (1982, cited in Furnham, 1994, pp.93-94).

Since so many aspects of social behavior are culture-specific, it is likely that a person who is new to a culture will fail to initiate or perform appropriate social behavior and thus fail to communicate effectively (Furnham, 1994).

### Culture Shock

Culture shock is the term that is described as "the shock of the new," "individuals lacking points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behavior" (Furnham, 1994), "phenomena ranging from mild irritability to deep psychological panic and crisis" (Brown 1994, p.170).

Culture shock is a common experience for people in the initial stages of residence in a foreign culture and is part of the acculturation process. There is a consensus that the degree of culture shock is related to the amount of difference between a person's own culture and that of the foreign country he or she lives in. As mentioned above, the degree of culture shock can be reduced by an increase in awareness of the target culture and by the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture (Furnham, 1994; Nababan, 1974).

### Acculturation - Adjustment to a New Culture

Acculturation refers to the adaptation process of an individual to a new culture (Brown, 1994; Coleman, 1996). Schumann (1978a), in his acculturation model for second language acquisition, brings forth two major causal variables: social variables (dominance patterns, integration strategies, enclosure, cohesiveness, size and

length of residence) and psychological variables (language shock, culture shock, motivation and ego-permeability).

Social variables pertain to the relationship between the second language learning group (2LL) and the target language group (TL). Schumann (1978a) contends that if the TL group is politically, economically and technically superior to the 2LL group, and if the two groups do not share the same social constructs, the 2LL group will be less likely to acculturate in the TL culture. In the same way, if the 2LL group is large and cohesive, intragroup contact will be more frequent than intergroup contact, which causes the 2LL group to separate from the TL group and thus inhibits acculturation.

Similarly, if the 2LL group does not overcome language and culture shock or does not have motivation or ego permeability, it is unlikely to acculturate into the target culture.

These two variables play a crucial role in the acquisition of the target language and culture. Schumann (1973, cited in Brown, 1993) argues that in situations where social and psychological distance are minimal between the culture of the second language learner and the culture of the target language group, the acquisition of the target language will be enhanced. In other words,



the degree of a learner's acculturation to the target language group and its culture influences his or her acquisition of the target language.

Some linguists, on the other hand, believe that psychological variables have a greater influence on the learning of the second language than social variables. In her study, Stauble (1978), for example, revealed that psychological distance appears to be a better predictor of ESL proficiency than social distance (1978, cited in Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p.260).

Stauble's study suggests that learners' positive attitudes towards the target culture can play an important role in the acculturation process. In addition, although there might be great differences between two cultures, a positive attitude can eliminate the influence of a large degree of social distance. Here, the importance of awareness in target culture comes forth again. Sensitizing people to the differences between their own culture and the target culture would certainly encourage positive attitudes towards the target culture.

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#### The Role of Target Culture in ESL/EFL Classrooms

The above views on cross-cultural communication emphasize the fact that people with different values, world views and different ways of life are likely to

encounter "intercultural stumbling blocks" (Smith, 1981). In order to communicate effectively in a foreign language, one must have knowledge of the culture of the speakers of that language. This, of course, has had its impact on the field of foreign/second language teaching and learning. Doye summarizes the current views in the field of EFL/ESL as follows (1993, cited in Byram et al., 1994, pp.39-40):

There exists today a widespread consensus concerning the justification of the demand that foreign language teaching should not just be limited to the mediation of competence in understanding and using other languages, but that, in addition or closely linked to this, foreign language teaching should include the mediation of knowledge about the culture, from which the language arises, and attitudes towards members of the culture.

Byram et al. (1994) state that language learning has proven to be insufficient in recent decades since it does not lead to communication and interaction but merely the encoding of a message. According to Byram et al., "there can be no negotiation of shared meanings and understanding of the world if interlocutors simply encode

their own meaning without seeking to understand its relationship to that of others" (p.39).

Seelye (1988), viewing language as "primarily a social instrument" (p.15), states that "knowledge of the linguistic structure alone does not carry with it any special insight into the political, religious or economic system" (p.6). Therefore, learning a foreign language means not only mastering its linguistic rules, but also learning its culture (Seelye, 1988). Similarly, according to Lado (1988, P.74) "communication without regard to its cultural contexts and meanings is at best incomplete; at worst, it is a sure ticket to miscommunication and misunderstanding." Other linguists (for example, Brown, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Hinkel, 1995; Kramsch, 1993; Kramsch et al., 1996; Shanahan, 1997; Valdes, 1988) share the same view with regard to the interrelationship of language and culture and they contend that target culture should be an integral part of the foreign language teaching/learning process.

According to this survey, knowledge of target culture, therefore, enhances students' understanding and appreciation of both their own culture and the target culture, helps learners develop positive attitudes toward the target language (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996), and

"minimizes culture shock" (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, cited in Byram et al., 1994, p.106).

### Studies in Cross-cultural Communication

Recent studies in cross-cultural communication provide strong evidence that target culture learning is crucial and that it should be an integral part of EFL/ESL.

Hinkel (1995) carried out a study in order to determine whether non-native speakers of English coming from different language communities use modal verbs of obligation and necessity similarly to native speakers of American English. Over a period of five years, 280 essays written by native speakers were compared to 455 essays on similar topics written by Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian and Vietnamese students, who were from cultures influenced by Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist thought, which is distinct from Western societies. These students were asked to write about topics such as family roles and responsibilities, relationships, friendships, cultural traditions, education, patriotism and politics. Overall, the study indicates that the non-native speakers' usage of modal verbs of obligation and necessity differed significantly from that of native speakers due to differences in the presuppositions and

axiomatic values of native and non-native speakers. As a concluding remark, Hinkel (1995) states that the usage of the modals "must," "have to," "should," "ought to" and "need to" in the writing of native and non-native speakers appears to be culture and context dependent. Hinkel suggests that the teaching of the second language can be made more effective if fundamental socio-cultural presuppositions in the second language are also brought forth.

In another study, Hinkel (1994) describes the differences between the writing conventions of Anglo-American native speakers and non-native speakers from cultures influenced by Confucian and Taoist thought. In the study, native speakers were asked to compare and evaluate four English texts, two written by a native speaker and the other two by an advanced ESL student. The results of Hinkel's study show that these students' interpretations of the rhetorical notions differed greatly due to their different writing conventions. Hinkel concludes that, in order for ESL learners to be able to interpret English texts, knowledge of Anglo-American written discourse is necessary.

Another study by Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) shows the importance of helping foreign language learners gain insight into differences between cultures. This is a

study of ethnographic interviewing techniques conducted by 26 American students learning Spanish at San Diego State University. The stages that the students went through were background reading on culture and ethnographic interviewing techniques, in-class training, and ethnographic interviews with Spanish speakers. The results of the study show that participating in the ethnographic interviewing of Spanish speakers had a positive effect on the students' attitudes toward the study of Spanish and enhanced their understanding both of their own culture and that of local Spanish speakers.

All the studies mentioned above suggest that sensitizing foreign students to target culture reduces misconceptions and misunderstandings and enhances cross-cultural communication.

#### Arguments against Target Culture Teaching/Learning in EFL/ESL Classrooms

There are, however, some arguments against the teaching of target culture in foreign language classrooms. One common argument is that the teaching of target culture may impede, rather than enhance second/foreign language acquisition. According to Alptekin (1993), for example, cultural elements pose problems for foreign language learners as they interfere

with the natural process of learning. Alptekin states that to acquire a foreign language, learners make use of the knowledge of their own culture - their "schematic knowledge" - and when they are forced to develop a new identity through the target culture, they are likely to face "serious socio-psychological problems" (p.139).

Alptekin also argues that the English language, as a lingua franca in our century, does not belong to one particular culture and, thus, it would be wrong to teach learners Anglo-American or British culture with the English language. He, therefore, suggests teaching the English language through local contexts which learners are familiar with.

For Prodromou, (1988) like Alptekin (1993), the domination of the English language and its unfamiliar culture in developing countries are likely to cause learners to feel alienated from their own cultural identity and to reject learning the language. Prodromou, thus, like Alptekin (1993), suggests working on local varieties of English that are culturally appropriate for learners.

Similarly, Said Talib (1992) also suggests that, in a country where a non-native variety of English is spoken, using materials that have been written in local, non-native variety, rather than native or standard

variety, is more beneficial to learners. He suggests that this will enhance learners' "sociocultural awareness, sense of self-identity, and communicative competence within the community they live in" (p.51).

While such views may be justifiable, they nevertheless fail to acknowledge the fact that depending only on one's native culture while learning a foreign language might provoke excessive ethnocentrism, negative attitudes and hostility towards the target language society (Brown, 1994). It is also suggested that a native culture, as well as one's native language, interferes with foreign language learning (Lado, 1988; Valdes, 1986) and, "to superimpose the native culture on the target language" leads to a "gross misfit" or "impasse" (Valdes, 1986, p.121).

Contrary to the views of Prodromou (1988), Alptekin (1993), and Talib (1992), many linguists now believe that the teaching of target culture would sensitize language learners to the similarities, as well as differences, between their own culture and that of the target language society (Bentahila & Davies, 1989; Byram et al., 1994; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Valdes, 1986).



### Conclusion

In light of the literature reviewed in this chapter, the definition of culture on which this study will be based is a combination of what Holliday (1997) refers to as "large culture" and "small culture." Based on individuals' perceptions in various "small culture" settings, this study will attempt to reveal to what extent Turkish people's perceptions can be generalized according to distinctive U.S. cultural patterns, ie. "large culture."

Irving (1986) questions the notion of the "American way of life" and states that whether there is such a notion still remains unanswered. However, Irving contends that although cultures change through time, it is commonly agreed that a set of values that are the basis for our behavior remains unchanged, and "allows for stability and a certain amount of predictability in our lives (1986, p.32).

It is true that members of different cultures view one another through the filters of their own culture and their own ideas of reality (Steward, 1972). Nevertheless, it is useful to consider large culture in situations where people from extremely diverse cultural background come into contact.

Turkey, not being part of Western/European culture, is significantly different from the U.S. in terms of its cultural tradition, social structure, and its "way of life". Therefore, if approached with care to avoid forming stereotypes of American people, some useful generalizations about U.S. culture can be made in order to familiarize Turkish students with U.S. culture. For genuine cross-cultural communication to take place, a person must become aware of the culture of the people with whom they are communicating (Furnham, 1994; Lado, 1988; Smith, 1981).

It is of utmost importance for Turkish students who will study in the U.S. to have an awareness of the differences between the dominant cultural patterns of the U.S. and those of their own country. This will, undoubtedly, reduce the degree of culture shock in the acculturation process as well as shorten the length of time required for adjustment to life in the U.S.

In this chapter, the literature concerning the teaching of target culture in EFL /ESL classrooms and its importance in cross-cultural communication has been reviewed. In the next chapter, the research design of the study will be explained.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### Overview of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate Turkish students' experiences in the U.S. regarding cross-cultural adjustments; and the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of the graduate students who are attending a language course at the Department of Basic English (DBE), Middle East Technical University (METU), in preparation for further study in the United States.

This is a qualitative research study and, as the research question is original, I designed the research project and the instruments for data collection myself.

In this chapter I will describe the informants, the instruments used in data collection, and the data collection procedures. I will also describe the analyses, including the method of organization, analysis, and arrangement of data from the study, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

### The Informants

In this study, I collected data from three different groups of informants. These were returned students, i.e. those who had studied in the United States and had returned to Turkey; students who were studying in the

United States at the time of the study; and students who were enrolled in an English language course at the DBE, METU, and who would be traveling to the United States for further study.

### Returned Students

The first group of informants I contacted was returned students, that is, those who had completed their studies in the United States and had returned to Turkey. This group consisted of six informants with whom I conducted interviews. Four of these informants were female, all of whom were working at different universities in Ankara, Turkey. The other two informants were male; one of them was working as an administrator at a university while the other informant was working for a private company. The age distribution of the informants falls in the range of 28 to 32.

Since I could reach only a limited number of people in this group, the informants' personal background - age, gender, and the amount of time the informants spent in the United States - was not taken into consideration in the selection of these informants. The only criterion that I had in mind was the year these informants had returned to Turkey after completing their studies in the United States. Ideally, the informants who had returned

most recently - in the last three years - would have been the most helpful for the data in this study in terms of providing 'fresher information' while memories of their experiences in the U.S. were still vivid.

However, due to the limited opportunities of access to these people, I had to discard this criterion and interview the informants without knowledge of when they had been in the United States. Detailed information about these informants such as age, background, the duration of stay in the U.S. and the year of return to Turkey, was revealed during the interviews.

The interviews, in fact, revealed that the criterion of the year of the informants' return to Turkey was met. All the informants had returned to Turkey within the last three years, with the exception of one informant, who returned to Turkey in 1994, that is, within the last four years.

#### Students in the United States

The second group of informants was 45 students who were studying in the United States at the time of this study. Like the first group mentioned above, the information with regard to their personal background was revealed through the questionnaire. Of the 45 informants, 27 were male and 18 were female; their age range was

between 23 and 39. These informants were studying at universities in various U.S. states (See Chapter 4, Table 2). They were given a semi-structured questionnaire via e-mail (See Appendix B).

#### Students at METU, Turkey

Finally, 142 students who were taking an English language course at the DBE, METU, constituted the third group of informants for this study. These students had been awarded government scholarships for further study in the United States and, as preparation for their studies in the U.S., they had been sent to the DBE, METU, to take a language course.

The course started on March 10, 1998 and it was projected to continue until the end of the year 1998, depending on the students' English language proficiency level. These students were given a close-ended questionnaire to determine their perceived needs in terms of the culture that they would encounter both in academic and social life (See Appendix C).

#### Data Collection Instruments

During the course of the study, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data through interviews, a semi-structured questionnaire and a close-ended

questionnaire. In this section, I will describe these three kinds of data collection instruments.

### Interviews

The semi-structured, open-ended interviews that I conducted with the returned students constituted the first step of data collection for this study. Patton (1990) contends that "the purpose of interviewing is...to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (p. 278). Sharing Patton's view, I designed and conducted the interviews in order to gain insight into the informants' perceptions of their experiences of living in the United States. Hence, the interview comprised questions (See Appendix A) that revealed the informants' backgrounds, their feelings and opinions about their experiences of living in a foreign culture, and what their perceptions were in terms of the distinctive patterns of U.S. culture as opposed to Turkish culture.

Considering the possibility that the informants might feel uncomfortable speaking in English, although all the informants were proficient in English, they were asked whether they would prefer to speak English or Turkish during the interview. Two of the informants preferred to use English. I believe that giving the informants the option of using the language they

preferred allowed more sincere and informal conversation during the interviews and thus enhanced the quality of the data.

Before the actual interviews, I piloted the interview questions with two informants and made some revisions in the questions. I both tape-recorded and transcribed the interviews (See Appendix D) and, in addition, I took notes during these interviews. Since four of the interviews were conducted in Turkish, I translated into English the parts of the transcriptions that are presented as direct quotations in the data analysis in Chapter 4.

#### Semi-Structured Questionnaire

The second instrument I made use of in data collection was a semi-structured questionnaire. Through e-mail, the questionnaire was sent to students who were studying in the United States at the time of this study.

The questionnaire was in English and comprised 24 questions, of which 5 were open-ended (See Appendix B). Before it was sent to all the informants, it was piloted with ten informants. Like the interview questions, the aim of the semi-structured questionnaire was to explore these students' feelings and opinions about living and studying in a culture different from their own and to



gain insight into their perceptions of the distinctive patterns of U.S. culture and the role of target culture in learning a foreign language.

#### Close-Ended Questionnaire

The third instrument used for data collection was a close-ended questionnaire, which was given to post-graduate students at the DBE, METU, who had originally inspired this research project. The close-ended questionnaire was prepared on the basis of analyses of the interviews and the semi-structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire (See Appendix C) consisted of 14 questions. Its aim was to impart the attitudes of these students towards the culture they would soon encounter; their perceived needs in terms of their life in the United States; and finally, their expectations from a language course that aims to prepare these students for further study in the U.S.

#### Procedures

In order to be able to contact returned students, I first consulted the Fulbright Commission Office and the Ministry of Education in Ankara, which had awarded these students scholarships for further study in the United

States. It was from these institutions that I obtained the telephone numbers of the informants in my study.

I was given the phone numbers of sixteen people, five of whom were living in other cities in Turkey, and three of whom I could not reach by telephone. Of the remaining eight people, two did not consent to being interviewed; hence, I conducted interviews with six people.

As I mentioned earlier, I could not access information about these students' backgrounds since such information is kept confidential. Therefore, I contacted all the people available. However, since I initially asked them whether they would be willing to be interviewed, they can be categorized as volunteers. After the informants consented to being interviewed, the date, time and place of the interviews were arranged and the interviews were held in March and April 1998. Each interview lasted about one hour and was tape-recorded. The interviews were conducted in both Turkish and English, depending on the preference of the informants.

I obtained the e-mail addresses of the second group of informants, again through the Fulbright Commission Office and teachers at the DBE, METU, who had taught English to some of these students before they went to the U.S., and who still had contact with these students. I

sent a message to 37 students to ask whether they would be interested in answering a questionnaire and they were all willing to do so. In addition, the students helped me access other students they knew in the United States so the total number of students who answered the questionnaire rose to 45.

Before the questionnaire was sent to all the informants, it was piloted with 10 informants. Some of the questions were revised in the light of the feedback obtained from the piloting. The questionnaire was in English since these students were living in an English-speaking environment and had to use English all the time. However, the informants were given the option of answering the questions in Turkish, in the belief that the use of the Turkish language would generate richer data, especially in open-ended questions. The relevant answers of the questionnaire were also translated into English for data analysis.

After the analysis of the interviews and the semi-structured questionnaire, a close-ended questionnaire was designed, to be given to 142 post-graduate students taking a language course at the DBE, METU. This questionnaire was written to expand on the awareness of these students with regard to the culture they would soon encounter and their expectations from a language course

that aims to prepare these students for further study in the U.S.

After permission had been granted by the DBE administration, the close-ended questionnaire was distributed to the students at the DBE, METU on May 27, 1998, during the first ten minutes of the class period.

### Data Analysis

In the first step of the data analysis, the data from the interviews were transcribed and the relevant parts were translated into English. The qualitative data from the interviews and the open-ended answers in the semi-structured questionnaire were analyzed by self-devised descriptive categories for coding.

Finally, the quantitative data from the close-ended and semi-structured questionnaires, in Likert-scale and rank-order format, were analyzed through frequencies and percentages as well as the means for each item.

The data analysis procedures will be explained in a more detailed manner in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this descriptive study was to investigate Turkish students' experiences in the U.S. regarding cross-cultural adjustments and the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of the graduate students at the DBE, METU, who will be going to the U.S. for further study.

In this study, data were collected from three different groups of informants through semi-structured and close-ended questionnaires and interviews.

Interviews were held with the first group of informants, the students who had studied in the United States previously and who had returned to Turkey. The interviews were tape-recorded and conducted in both Turkish and English, depending on the preference of the informants. The informants were asked whether they would prefer to speak English or Turkish during the interview; and two of the six informants preferred to use English.

The semi-structured questionnaire was e-mailed to the second group of informants, who were studying in the United States at the time of study. The questions were in English, since these informants were in the United States and were exposed to the English language most--if not

all--of the time. However, these informants were given the opportunity to use Turkish if they preferred to. Twenty-one informants preferred to use English and the other twenty-four informants used both English and Turkish.

Finally, a close-ended questionnaire was given to the third group of students, who were enrolled in an English language course at the DBE, METU and who would be traveling to the United States for further study. The questions were in Turkish.

Both the interview questions and the semi-structured questionnaire aimed at revealing the students' perceptions of the distinctive characteristics of the U.S. culture, the difficulties they encountered due to cultural differences when they first went to the U.S., and their feelings and experiences about living in the United States. These informants were also asked what kind of a language course they would like to see designed in Turkey in order to prepare Turkish students for life in the United States.

In light of the findings of the interviews and the semi-structured questionnaire, a close-ended questionnaire containing parallel questions was prepared and administered to the students enrolled in a language course at the DBE, METU. This allowed for the comparison

between perceived needs pertaining to U.S. culture by the DBE students and actual needs stated by the students who experienced living in the United States.

#### DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The analysis of qualitative and quantitative data was carried out using the following procedures.

##### Qualitative Data

First, all the interviews were transcribed, and the relevant parts of the Turkish transcriptions were translated into English. Similarly, the answers in Turkish given to the open-ended questions were translated into English. For reliability, the translated parts of the transcriptions and the open-ended answers were double-checked by an English colleague from the DBE, METU. The results revealed full agreement and thus ensured the reliability of the translated parts.

In the second step, the data were analyzed by developing a coding system, which involved "searching through [my] data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics [my] data cover" and creating codes that represent these topics and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.166). Miles & Huberman (1994) define codes as "tags or labels for assigning units to the descriptive or

inferential information compiled during a study" and can be of varying size from words to sentences (p.56). Hence, after reading through the transcriptions and the open-ended answers in the questionnaire several times, codes were created for each topic, given a three-letter name "that is closest to the concept it is describing" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.64) and arranged in main categories and subcategories. In addition, the occurrence of the same topics was displayed in frequencies and percentages. The code categories were not predetermined; they emerged during the coding process (See Appendix E).

In order to achieve the "intercoder reliability" and "definitional clarity" of code categories (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.64), a colleague from the DBE, METU was asked to code a set of open-ended answers from the questionnaire separately. When the two codings of these open-ended answers were reviewed together, a strong intercoder agreement was observed. Having established intercoder reliability, three-letter acronyms to represent the code categories were created.

Finally, intra-coder reliability" was achieved through the agreement between the initial coding and recoding procedures (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.64). Two sets of transcriptions were coded and a week later they were coded again on an uncoded copy. The comparison of



the initial coding and recoding revealed an "intra-coder agreement" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.64).

### Quantitative Data

The close-ended questionnaire and the questions other than the open-ended ones in the semi-structured questionnaire were designed in a rating-scale or rank-order format; therefore, the analysis of the results were displayed in terms of frequencies and percentages, and means for each item. Question 6 (See Appendix C) was not analyzed since it did not answer the research questions of this study.

The data analysis was presented according to topics, and findings of parallel questions from the two questionnaires and the interviews were compared.

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the interviews, the semi-structured and the close-ended questionnaires are discussed in this chapter under the following three headings:

1. Perceptions of U.S. Culture Based on Actual Experience
2. Perceptions of U.S. Culture Based on Anticipated Experience
3. Former, On-going and Suggested Future Language

## Courses

### Perceptions of U.S. Culture based on Actual Experience

In this section, the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data from the semi-structured (e-mailed) questionnaire and the interviews are presented. The analysis reveals the informants' living experiences in the United States, their feelings about living the U.S. and their perceptions of the differences between the U.S. and Turkish cultures.

### Description of Informants

The biographical information of the two groups of informants is presented under separate headings: the informants of the interviews and the informants of the e-mailed questionnaire.

### The Informants of the Interviews

The interviews were held with six informants, of whom two were male and four were female. During the interviews nine questions were asked (See Appendix A) in order to gain insight into the informants' feelings and experiences of living in the United States, the differences they perceived between the U.S. culture and the Turkish. The informants were also asked their

opinions about an 'ideal' language course that would cater to the needs of Turkish students who would be traveling to the United States for further study.

In this study, in order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used instead of the actual names of the informants. Table 1 summarizes the background information of these informants with regard to age, present job, period and purpose of stay in the United States, and the state lived in:

TABLE 1

Background Information of the Informants of the Interviews

Pseudonym	Age	Present Job	Stay in the U.S.	Purpose	U.S. State resided in
Pembe	28	English instructor	1993-1994	Exchange visitor	Pennsylvania
Elvan	29	Teacher trainer	1993-1995	MA	Pennsylvania
Haldun	26	Electrical engineer	1994-1996	MA	Arizona
Aysun	32	Research assistant	1995-1996	Research associate	New Jersey
Salih	30	Assistant professor	1991-1997	MA & PhD	Michigan & California
Oya	31	Research assistant	1996-1997	Research associate	California

As can be seen in Table 1, of all the informants, Salih stayed in the United States the longest and returned to Turkey after having completed his PhD. With

the exception of Haldun, all the informants are academics and work at English-medium universities.

All the informants were awarded scholarships in order to study in the United States. Salih was awarded a government scholarship like the informants attending a language course at the DBE, METU, and he took the same language course in 1991, before he went to the United States. Aysun and Haldun were sponsored by the Fulbright Commission, which is an American organization. These two informants had an orientation session organized by Fulbright both in Turkey and the U.S. to prepare students for life in the U.S.

Another informant, Pembe, went to the United States as an exchange visitor sponsored by UNICEF. Although she did not have to attend any courses during her stay in the U.S., she took a course in cultural studies, which increased her knowledge of American higher education system. The other two informants, Oya and Elvan, were sponsored by other private organizations and did not have orientation of any kind before going to the U.S.

#### The Informants of the E-mailed Questionnaire

The semi-structured questionnaire had twenty-four items. Excluding the other ten informants with whom the

questionnaire was piloted, forty-five informants answered the questionnaire.

Of the forty-five informants, 27(60.0%) were male and 18(40%) were female. Thirty-eight (84.8%) informants were between ages 23-28. Among the 45 informants, 3(6.7%) were married and lived with their spouses while in the United States, and 3(6.7%) were engaged and had left their fiances behind in Turkey. The average amount of time the informants had been living in the US at the time of the study was 2.6 years, ranging from eight months to eleven years.

Thirty-four (75.6%) informants were from the four biggest cities of Turkey, namely Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana and eleven (24.4%) informants were from various other cities. Again, 26(57.8%) informants graduated from the three English-medium universities, which are Boğaziçi, Bilkent and Middle East Technical University, and 19(42.2%) studied at Turkish-medium universities.

While in the United States, 19(42.2%) of these informants lived in the states in Midwest, 13(28.9%) lived in the Southern states, 7(15.6%) informants lived in the East, and 6(13.3%) on the West Coast. These informants were enrolled in graduate programs at various departments of universities.

Table 2 below illustrates the universities where the informants were studying and the number of informants at each university at the time of study:

TABLE 2

Universities and Number of Informants at each University  
(N= 44)

<u>University</u>	<u>N</u>
Midwest	
University of Wisconsin	8
University of Illinois	9
University of Michigan	2
South	
Louisiana State University	1
University of Tennessee	1
East	
University of Maryland	11
Syracuse University	3
State University of N.Y.	1
University of Pennsylvania	1
University of Hartford	1
Rochester Institute of Technology	1
West Coast	
Arizona State University	3
University of Texas	1
Colorado School of Mines	1

Note. One student had newly graduated at the time of study.

Questions 10, 11, 12 and 13 were asked in order to obtain information about the informants' living arrangements in the US and the frequency of their social contact both with other Turkish people and American people. These questions were analyzed together assuming

that where and with whom the informants were staying might affect the frequency of social contact they have with their compatriots and American people, a topic which is directly related to Schumann's (1978a) cohesiveness and size variables in acculturation model.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, Schumann (1978a) contends that if the second language learning group (2LL) is cohesive, intragroup contact (among Turkish people) will be more frequent than intergroup contact (between Turkish and American people). Hence, questions 10-13 were posed to get an idea about the social life patterns of the Turkish students in the United States, which in turn, would yield a clearer understanding of their perceived differences between Turkish and the U.S. cultures. This topic will be dealt with later in this chapter.

Table 3 shows the findings of questions 10, 11, 12 and 13, providing the mean scores for the frequency of the informants' social contact with American and Turkish people.

TABLE 3  
Students' Living Arrangements and Frequency of  
Socializing with Other Turks and Americans (N=45)

Type of Accommodation	N	Frequency of Social Contact											
		with Turks						with Americans					
		5	4	3	2	1	<u>M</u>	5	4	3	2	1	<u>M</u>
		N						N					
<hr/>													
In a Shared apartment with													
Turks	15	7	2	6	0	0	4.1	1	4	4	2	4	2.7
Americans	7	0	3	1	1	2	2.7	2	1	1	3	0	3.3
Other Internationals	2	1	0	1	0	0	4.0	0	1	1	0	0	3.5
<hr/>													
In an Apartment													
Alone	14	3	3	5	2	1	3.4	2	4	3	2	3	3.0
With Wife	3	0	0	2	0	1	2.3	2	0	0	1	0	4.0
<hr/>													
In the dormitory	3	2	0	0	1	0	4.0	2	0	0	1	0	4.0
<hr/>													
With an American Family	1	0	0	1	0	0	3.0	0	0	1	0	0	3.0

Note. 5=almost everyday, 4=about three times a week, 3=about once a week, 2=about once a month, 1=almost never.

As can be seen in Table 3, of forty-five informants, 24(53.3%) were staying in a shared apartment with other people. Fifteen (33.3%) were sharing a flat with Turkish people, 7(15.6%) with American people, and 2(4.4%) informants were sharing a flat with other international students. Fourteen (31.1%) informants were living in an apartment on their own, 3(6.7%) at the dormitory. All



three married informants were living in an apartment with their wives and only one informant was staying with an American family.

Table 3 reveals the fact that the informants who were sharing an apartment with Turkish students socialized more ( $\underline{M}=4.1$ ) with other Turkish people than they did with Americans ( $\underline{M}=2.7$ ). The reverse situation can be observed with the informants who were sharing an apartment with Americans ( $\underline{M}=3.3$  for social contact with Americans versus  $\underline{M}=2.7$  for social contact with Turks).

It is interesting to note that three out of the four informants who were staying with Turks and who almost never socialized with Americans were engaged to Turks who stayed behind in Turkey. Similarly, two-thirds of the married informants had American spouses and as it can be seen in Table 3, this is reflected in the frequency of their social contact with Americans ( $\underline{M}=4.0$ ) and Turks ( $\underline{M}=2.3$ ). Informants who were staying in the dormitories and with an American family seem to have had a balanced frequency of social contact with both Turks and Americans.

In this subsection, the background information about the informants who had previously studied in the United States and had returned to Turkey and about those studying in the US at the time of study were presented.

The reason for asking such detailed background information was to find out whether the informants' background had a significant effect on their experiences in the U.S., which will be discussed in the next chapter.

### Familiarity with U.S. Culture

Both groups of informants were asked to what extent they were familiar with U.S. culture before they went to live in the U.S. (See Appendix A, Question 2; Appendix B, Questions 15, 16). The questions in the semi-structured questionnaire were in Likert-scale format and the results were displayed in terms of the percentage of the frequency of responses. The analysis of the data from the informants in the U.S. is displayed in Table 4.

TABLE 4

The Informants' Degree of Familiarity with U.S. Culture  
in terms of Daily, Social, and Academic Life (N= 45)

Items	1	2	3	4	5	<u>M</u>
Daily and Social life	6.7%	31.1%	28.9%	24.4%	8.9%	3.0
Academic life	6.7%	11.1%	46.7%	20.0%	15.6%	3.3

Note. 1= Almost 0%, 2= Very little, 3= Some, 4= A lot,  
5= Almost 100%

As Table 4 indicates, overall, the informants had "some" familiarity with U.S. culture before they went to the United States. It is clear in Table 4 that the

informants had relatively more familiarity with U.S. academic life. While 37.8% of the informants had little or no familiarity at all with daily and social life, only 17.8% had little or no familiarity with academic life. Similarly, 15.6% informants indicated that they knew almost everything about U.S. academic life whereas only 8.9% had the same degree of familiarity with U.S. daily and social life.

The findings indicate that the informants were more concerned with U.S. academic life than daily or social life. One informant's comment on his answer is interesting: He stated that when he went to the United States, he realized that he knew less about U.S. culture than he thought he had.

Of the six informants who were interviewed, two informants stated that they knew a lot about U.S. culture before going to the U.S. One of them was a research assistant at the department of American Culture and Literature. This informant said that she enjoyed living among American people and witnessing what she had read in books practiced in real life (Interview, March 19, 1998).

One other informant had almost no familiarity with U.S. culture: "At that time, whatever I was exposed to on the screen about the U.S., that was the idea of the U.S. in my mind" (Interview, April 21, 1998). Another

informant who also was not familiar with U.S. culture said that he considered himself privileged to have been sponsored by the Fulbright Commission since Fulbright's orientation sessions in both Turkey and the U.S. was very helpful for him in gaining an awareness of U.S. culture. This informant expressed his feeling about these orientation sessions as follows:

" This orientation session was extremely useful. It prepared me to the life there (in the U.S.) psychologically, and I knew what to expect when I went there" (Interview, March 18, 1998).

The orientation seminar held by the Fulbright Commission will be mentioned later in this chapter.

### Perception of U.S. Culture

Data from the semi-structured questionnaire (See Appendix B, Questions 14a,b and 19) and the interviews revealed the informants' perceptions of the differences between U.S. culture and Turkey in terms of social life and academic life. In this section, the data were coded and organized around topics. The code categories were not predetermined; they emerged during the coding process. The major code categories are presented in bold type and the subcategories are indented and preceded by a hyphen.

## Social Life

Table 5 displays each code category with its acronym for the U.S. cultural patterns in terms of social life:

TABLE 5

### Code Categories and their Acronyms for U.S. Cultural Patterns regarding Social Life

Acronyms	Code Categories
<b>SOA</b>	<b>Social Attitude</b>
-IND	Individualistic
-DIR	Direct
-SOC	Sociable
-RES	Respectful
-INF	Informal
-NAF	Not Affectionate
-PRO	Proximity
-PRE	Prejudiced
-SEL	Selfish
<b>NOF</b>	<b>Nature of Friendships</b>
-DIS	Distant
-SUP	Superficial
<b>RBS</b>	<b>Relationship between Sexes</b>
-EQU	Equal
<b>FAR</b>	<b>Family Relationships</b>
<b>AWO</b>	<b>Attitude towards Work</b>
-HAR	Hardworking
-CON	Conscientious
<b>ARU</b>	<b>Adherence to Rules</b>
<b>AEN</b>	<b>Attitude towards Entertainment</b>
<b>FOO</b>	<b>Food</b>
<b>SOS</b>	<b>Social Structure</b>
-ORG	Organization
-TRA	Transportation
-DIV	Diversity

Table 5 displays nine major categories and their sub-categories that were formed according to the informants' answers from the interviews and the e-mailed questionnaire.

In Figures 1, 2, and 3 results of the data analysis in terms of the informants' perceptions of the differences between U.S. and Turkish cultures regarding social life are presented. In each figure, frequencies and selected quotations that fit under each category are displayed. The quotations written in Turkish were translated into English. In some quotations, pronoun references were indicated in parentheses for clarification of meaning.

FIGURE 1

Main Code Category 1(Social Attitude)

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations from E-mailed Questionnaire & Interviews
<b>SOA</b>		
-IND	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkish people are group-oriented. In America everyone is on their own. If you are successful, you are successful because of yourself, because of what you have achieved.</li> <li>• In the U.S. they have what is called "individualism. Everybody works for and thinks about him/herself.</li> </ul>
-DIR	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honesty is an important part of Americans' life. They are straightforward and they don't talk behind anyone.</li> <li>• They (Americans) gossip less and they tell you directly what they have in their mind.</li> </ul>

- SOC 5
  - In the U.S. people are generally more open socialize with people they meet at school, at work, etc.
  - They (Americans) are four times more sociable than Turks.
- RES 12
  - In the U.S. everyone respects everyone in every manner.
  - Here (in the U.S.) people are much more respectful and understanding to each other.
- INF 6
  - People greet each other even if they don't know each other. This is unusual for Turkish people.
  - When you see them (Americans) in the street they always say "Hi", "How are you?" etc. even if they don't know you.
- NAF 4
  - In Turkey we feel the requirement to show that we care for each other. In the U.S. they keep their feelings inside.
  - I said my dad passed away and he (American roommate) said "I'm sorry". But in Turkey we say lots of things. I was quite upset. I said "I'm sorry, is that it? Is that how you feel?"
  - Americans don't have physical contact. For instance, they don't give a hug or kisses to everybody they know.
- PRO 3
  - I remember I was at a supermarket, for example, it was a late time and the market was almost empty. I heard this man say "Excuse me" and I looked around and he was a metre away trying to push his cart and for some reason he felt that he was invading my space. I thought it was very unusual. In Turkey, we are always waiting in lines in front of the ATM machines like sardines.
- PRE 5
  - Sometimes your ethnic background, the fluency of your English, or your physical appearance might be barriers to socialize with Americans.
  - They (Americans) are prejudiced against certain ethnic groups. Where you come from is important. They approach to Europeans and people from Middle-east or Asia differently. For example, you are at a café or a bar and you start talking with (Americans). When they learn that you are Turkish, they suddenly become distant.
- SEL 3
  - They are extremely selfish in their lives. They don't think of anybody else.
  - I find Americans selfish. 50% married couples got a divorce according to statistics. "If you want this and I want

that, OK, let's go on our own ways". They don't even TRY to find a solution. But in Turkey, we do sacrifice, both men and women...

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Note: **SOA**= Social Attitude, **-IND**= Individualistic, **-DIR**= Direct, **-SOC**= Sociable, **-RES**= Respectful, **-INF**= Informal, **-NAF**= Not Affectionate, **-PRO**= Proximity, **-PRE**= Prejudiced, **-SEL**= Selfish.

Figure 1 indicates that in general, the informants perceive Americans as individualistic. The informants also perceive Americans as informal, sociable, direct and respectful to one another. Some informants perceived American people as not affectionate, selfish and prejudiced against certain ethnic groups.

Figure 2 displays the next three main code categories, namely, nature of friendships, relationships between sexes and family relationships. Like in Figure 1, frequencies and selected quotations that fit under each sub-category are presented in Figure 2.



FIGURE 2

Main Code Categories 2 (Nature of Friendships),  
3 (Relationships between Sexes), and 4 (Family  
Relationships)

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations from E-mailed Questionnaire & Interviews
<b>NOF</b>		
-DIS	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Americans try to keep a certain distance even with their close friends.</li> <li>In Turkey you phone your friend just to say "Hi, how are you doing?" but there (in the U.S.) when I wanted to do that, one of my friends, after I'd phoned her, just for nothing because I was so bored, she said "What can I do for you?". There's always a purpose for calling people. You never call people just to chat.</li> <li>Americans don't have close friendships.</li> </ul>
-SUP	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friendship (among Americans) do not have any depth, it is superficial.</li> <li>Me or my friends prefer to solve our problems by talking to friends, but Americans prefer psychiatrists I believe.</li> </ul>
<b>RBS</b>		
-EQU	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They (American girls) are capable of asking guys for a date without any hesitation. However, most Turkish girls think that everything must be initiated by guys in a relationship, in which Turkish girls are generally shy.</li> <li>Women and men do things together including going to football games and bars. We (Turks), on the other hand, being a male-dominant society, tend to socialize less with our partners. Women are not supposed to go to certain places or do certain things in Turkey.</li> </ul>
<b>FAR</b>	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm not going to generalize, but you wouldn't be surprized when you see so selfish patterns within an American family. For example, my first roommate had to find money for college and he couldn't get a loan from the bank. He borrowed money from his father and his father charged him 5% interest. It was weird. I mean, this is your son, why do you have to charge him of interest?</li> </ul>

- Family ties and values are much stronger in Turkey. Here, (in the U.S.) elderly people don't want to live with their children because they don't want to be dependent even in their 70s.

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Note. **NOF**= Nature of Friendships, **-DIS**= Distant, **-SUP**= Superficial, **RBS**= Relationship between Sexes, **-EQU**= Equal, **FAR**= Family Relationships.

As can be observed from Figure 2, the informants were of the opinion that Americans do not have close relationships with their friends. With the most frequency, Americans were perceived as distant and superficial in their relationships as opposed to Turkish people. The informants also thought that the family ties and values were not as strong in U.S. culture as in Turkish culture.

Figure 3 displays the other five main categories, which are attitude towards work, adherence to rules, attitude to entertainment, food and social structure. The data in these categories were treated in the same manner as the other categories in Figures 1 and 2.

FIGURE 3

Main Code Categories 5 (Attitude to Work), 6 (Adherence to Rules), 7 (Attitude to Entertainment), 8 (Food) and 9 (Social Structure)

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations from E-mailed Questionnaire & Interviews
<b>AWO</b>		
-HAR	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They (Americans) much more oriented towards work.</li> <li>• Americans are in love with their work. They work really hard to do their job as best they can.</li> <li>• I was surprized by Americans' attitude towards their work. They spent a lot of time and energy on their work until they complete it.</li> </ul>
-CON	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When it comes to work they (Americans) are very professional. They do their best to help you, to solve your problem.</li> <li>• They are incredibly patient and helpful. For example, when I went to open a bank account, the man there kept on explaining everything until he was sure that I understood everything clearly.</li> </ul>
<b>ARU</b>	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Americans are conditioned to follow rules whereas we are good at finding short-cuts and tricks.</li> <li>• They (Americans) pay taxes and obey the rules.</li> <li>• Americans obey the rules even without questioning them. They obey every rule even if it is not very clever, for example, waiting for the green light in an empty street.</li> <li>• During my stay in the U.S., I hadn't seen anybody not stop at the red light. People obey the rules, and this is one of their most important characteristics.</li> </ul>
<b>AEN</b>	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Americans turn every opportunity into fun, something that brings them together.</li> <li>• They (Americans) work hard during the weekdays and have fun like crazy at the weekends.</li> <li>• Their concept of entertainment is different from ours. For example, when you go to a bar you see people drinking their beers and watching TV. They go to bars in casual clothes whereas we put on our best clothes. And the bars close really early, at 2 o'clock in the morning.</li> </ul>

- They usually go to a bar and have a couple of beers after work.
  - Activities such as cocktails, social gatherings American people engage in are rather formal and pre-arranged. Our meetings with friends are more spontaneous.
  - We (Turks) usually meet at a friend's house, prepare and have dinner together whereas Americans prefer to socialize outside their homes; they meet their friends at bars.
- FOO**                      7
- Here I can't find the same kind of meat, especially fish, and vegetables I used to eat in Turkey.
  - Ordering food is like a quiz. One meal has so many details and the waiter asks you millions of questions about how you would like your meal.
  - Too much variety and junk food.
- SOS**
- ORG                  4
- Everything is very well-organized in daily life and the system runs smoothly.
  - Everything is organized around people's needs, and life is made easier for people.
  - There are no traffic problems, everything works like clockwork.
- TRA                  5
- In the U.S. public transport is not efficient. This is true for most of the states, and everybody has a car.
  - It (The U.S.) is a car-dependent society, public transport is not well-established.
- DIV                  5
- There are a lot of ethnic groups in the U.S., a lot of diversity unlike Turkish society. In Turkey everyone has more or less a similar background.
  - The U.S. is like a melting pot, people of almost all the nations and religions come here (the U.S.) from all over the world. The mosque, synagogue, church and Buddhism temple are all next to each other.
  - In America there are lots of people with different cultures. You can see anybody from any part of the world.

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Note: **AWO**= Attitude towards work, **-HAR**= Hardworking, **-CON**= Conscientious, **ARU**= Adherence to rules, **AEN**= Attitude towards Entertainment, **FOO**= Food, **SOS**= Social Structure, **-ORG**= Organization, **-TRA**= Transport, **-DIV**= Diversity

Figure 3 shows that the informants, with the highest frequency, found American people hardworking and very efficient in their work compared to Turkish people.

Other differences mentioned with a high frequency are American people's adherence to rules, attitude to entertainment and a great variety of food.

The informants found Americans' willingness to obey the rules and pay their taxes 'different.' Considering Turkish people's attitudes to the rules, especially concerning traffic, it is not surprising that some informants found it strange "to wait for the green light when the streets are empty".

Finally, the informants commented on the social structure of the United States, which is again different from Turkey. They mentioned the ethnic and religious diversity in the United States and they were impressed by the social system, which is organized so as to make daily life easier.

#### Academic Life

Table 6 presents the code categories for the informants' perceptions of the differences between U.S. and Turkish cultures in terms of academic life. The data reveals the perceptions of the differences in American graduate study rather than the whole education system since the informants were involved in graduate studies in the United States.

As mentioned earlier, the main categories are indicated in bold type and the sub-categories are indented and preceded by a hyphen:

TABLE 6

Code Categories and their Acronyms for U.S. Cultural Patterns regarding Academic Life

Acronyms	Code Categories
<b>NGS</b>	<b>Nature of Graduate Study Education System</b>
-ERE	Emphasis on Research
-RSC	Resources
-FSP	Financial Sponsorship
-HCL	Heavy Course Load
-BRR	Based on Rules and Requirements
-APE	Assessment of Performance
-ECT & LLU	Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Long-term Learning and Understanding
-FEX	Freedom of Expression
<b>AEB</b>	<b>American Students' Educational Behaviour</b>
-IND	Individualistic
-COM	Competitive
-HAR	Hardworking
-SDI	Self-disciplined

It can be seen in Table 6 that there are two main categories, which are related to the graduate study education system and the educational behaviour of American students. The data analysis of each main code

category is displayed in Figures 4 and 5, again, with selected quotations and frequency of each sub-category.

Figure 4 displays the data analysis of the first main category, which is the nature of graduate study education system.

Figure 4

Main Code Category 1 (Nature of Graduate Study Education System)

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations from E-mailed Questionnaire & Interviews
<b>NGS</b>		
-ERE	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduate education is quite different from the one in Turkey since students here are generally encouraged to do research in their field.</li> <li>• They (American professors) encourage you to do research.</li> <li>• Graduate education system is very research oriented in the U.S.</li> <li>• Academic studies are based on research.</li> </ul>
-RSC	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy access to computer-related information.</li> <li>• I just wish we (Turkey) didn't lack the resources they have here-computer labs, free access to the libraries with plenty of books, articles and journals.</li> <li>• American schools are computerized and have a great variety of resources.</li> <li>• In the U.S. you have everything you need for your education such as computer labs, laboratory tools and libraries in which you can find all sorts of books and articles.</li> </ul>
-FSP	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a connection between industry, army and the universities. The government and private industrial companies donate billions of dollars to universities for research.</li> <li>• The universities in the U.S. are sponsored by public and private companies for research.</li> </ul>
-HCL	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Here (In the U.S.) you have to be much more disciplined and organized in order to be able to catch up with the work. They give you a lot of homework.</li> </ul>

- U.S. graduate education system is definitely more demanding and challenging.
- In the U.S. you must work really hard and you cannot afford skipping classes.
- Too much work and responsibilities on students' part- papers, assignments, etc.
- The work load was very heavy. We were expected to do a lot of things. I had to write a lot of papers. I was under pressure and stress all the time and trying to meet the deadlines. The most important thing was time management. Here in Turkey I never thought of that. I found myself constantly organizing my time so that I could catch up. I turned into this frantic rabbit running everywhere. I didn't like it at all.

-BRR

7

- On our first day our professors gave us the syllabus for the whole semester and everything was written on the syllabus. They said, "OK, these are the readings I want you to do, this is when your first midterm is, this is when the assignment is due." There's no way you can tell them "I didn't know". They never went over the requirements again. This was our responsibility to check it (the syllabus) once in a while.
- (American) people are more strict about the rules concerning academic issues.
- The academic life is much more organized in that you don't have to ask hundred questions to fifty different people to figure out where an exam is, when you can see a professor, etc. The rules are very clearly set and clear deadlines for assignments are given.

-APE

5

- In Turkey personal associations could play a role in academic issues, but in the U.S. everything is based on rules.
- Here in Turkey you have to make yourself liked by the instructor with your personality, not with your academic performance. But in the U.S. the professor might have a very good relationship with you but when it comes to grading your academic performance, he is so fair. He gives the requirements and as long as you meet the requirements, it doesn't bother him to give everybody an A. No personal ties.

-ECT &amp; LLU 8

- Main point (in education) I guess is to teach you how to use your brain and logic rather than memorize everything like we do.
- They (Americans) try to learn the stuff whereas I used to study just before exams



and memorize things in order to pass the class, not to learn.

- They have a wonderful way of learning: learning by "questioning".
- In our universities, the courses are much heavier and theoretical. It's the opposite in the U.S. The aim is not to give you a hard time you but to encourage you to learn. They turn learning into pleasure, not torture. I think that's why they are more creative.
- In Turkey education is like a secret. You take a course and you always try to figure out what questions might be in the test. But in the U.S. they do everything to help you become successful. They tell you "this is what is important here and if you want to get ready for the test, this is the reading passage and this is the alternative form of the test, try it".
- In Turkey whatever the teacher says about the course is memorized, you never question it. In the U.S. your interpretation of the information is very important and you are expected challenge everything and express your point of view.

-FEX

4

- Education in the U.S. is much better in ALL aspects...especially the freedom of thinking and writing.
- To express your own point of view, no matter how stupid they are, is very important. They always encourage you to express yourself.
- They (Americans) appreciate whatever you think or write.

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Note: NGS= Nature of Graduate Study Education System, -ERE= Emphasis on Research, -RSC= Resources, -FSP= Financial Sponsorship, -HCL= Heavy Course Load, -BRR= Based on Rules and Requirements, -APE= Assessment of Performance, -ECT & LLU= Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Long-term learning and Understanding, -FEX= Freedom of Expression.

The analysis of the data in Figure 4 reveals that the informants perceive the graduate education system in the U.S. as more demanding and research-based. The informants also found great differences between Turkey and the U.S. regarding educational resources, which was mentioned with the highest frequency. These informants

mentioned the great number of libraries and computer labs through which students can access any information that they need. The informants also stated that the education system is based on rules and regulations and that personal associations do not interfere with the assessment of the academic performance of students.

One striking difference between the U.S. and Turkish education systems that was mentioned by the informants with a high frequency is the goal of education. As indicated by the informants, the graduate education system in the U.S. is more geared towards long-term learning and understanding and encourages critical thinking in contrast with short-term retention of facts and memorization. This is something "new" to Turkish students who are used to memorizing the information they receive without questioning it and forget everything after the exam.

The second main category related to the differences between the U.S. and Turkish cultures in terms of academic life is American students' educational behaviour (AEB).

Figure 5 displays the data analysis of the informants' perceptions as regards American students' educational behaviour:

FIGURE 5

Main Code Category 2 (American Students' Educational Behaviour)

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations from E-mailed Questionnaire & Interviews
<b>AEB</b>		
-IND	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They (American students) never share anything with you unless it's a group project. In Turkey you share your lecture notes with other students, but in the U.S. you never ask for it. In Turkey when somebody tries to look over your paper in the exam, you try to show and make it easy for him or her to see. In the U.S., they cover their paper with their bodies. They can cooperate within a group, but if you are given an individual assignment, no way, everybody does his or her job.</li> <li>• The teacher would even post the answers to the assignments a day before they were due. He would say "Before handing in your assignments, check your answers against the answer key". and I didn't see a single American student to copy the answers before doing his assignment.</li> <li>• I used to study with my friends as a group but here (U.S.) no, you have to study individually. Students check each other in the exams, not the professors, which is the opposite in Turkey, of course.</li> <li>• Most importantly, (American) people do not cheat in the exams. The students themselves complain about the ones who cheat.</li> <li>• The individualistic tendencies are reflected in the academic environment to a high degree.</li> </ul>
-COM	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They (American students) are highly competitive, but not necessarily showing it.</li> <li>• They are highly competitive, even the exam results are confidential.</li> <li>• Nobody shows their grade to their classmates, it's everybody's secret. There's this competition among them. Everybody wants to be number one.</li> </ul>
-HAR	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They (Americans) study hard. Everybody wants to get an A in the courses.</li> <li>• They mostly hardworking and proficient in practical aspects of education such as reading, obtaining information, practising their research, and having an overall understanding of the biggest picture.</li> </ul>

- |      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| -SDI | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think we should admit that Americans are much more disciplined than us. They definitely use their time much more effectively.<br/>Sometimes we can sacrifice our precious time, but Americans never do that.</li> <li>• If they have work to do they never waste their time and they can easily turn down anything that would keep them away from their work.</li> </ul> |
|------|---|---|

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Note: **AEB**= American Students' Educational Behaviour, **-IND**= Individualistic, **-COM**= Competitive, **-HAR**= Hardworking, **-SDI**= Self-disciplined

The data displayed in Figure 5 indicates that the informants perceived American students as individualistic, which is in total disagreement with Turkish students' educational behaviour. As the informants stated, it is very common for Turkish students to cooperate in their studies and share lecture notes, and even cheating can be perceived as cooperation for some, rather than an undesirable act.

The informants were also of the opinion that American students are highly competitive and hardworking, which are the two characteristics that the informants attributed to American people with the highest frequency. Another notable difference they observed is Americans' self-discipline, especially in terms of time management, which it seems that the informants had to acquire in order to meet the course requirements.

### Responses to Differences

This section discusses the informant's responses to the differences that they perceived between U.S. culture and that of their own. The data analysis of the informants' responses to these differences, or changes, are presented under four headings; namely, initial response, adjustment to the life in the U.S., communication difficulties, and perceived reasons for communication difficulties.

#### Initial Response

In the e-mailed questionnaire and during the interviews, some of the informants expressed their feelings about the first few months in the United States. One informant expressed her feeling as follows:

"When I first came to the United States, I thought, 'Oh my God, I must be on planet Mars!!!'" (E-mailed questionnaire, April 14, 1998)

Other three informants stated that they felt very lonely and needed to find and make friends with other Turkish students and that they grew more patriotic. Some of the quotes below were translated into English from Turkish:

- "Before going to the U.S. you think, 'Hurray, I'm going to the U.S.!' but when you go there you realize that it's not the U.S. you watch in the movies. You feel extremely lonely and you have to start everything right from the beginning. Nobody knows and cares about you and you have to cope with everything on your own. During the first few months there I constantly criticized Americans and became more patriotic, but later I learned to accept them as the way they are" (Interview, March 8, 1998).
- "The first time we went to Michigan State University- we were seven people, seven Turkish students in the same situation- we were like buddies at the beginning. We were such good friends because we had just one common thing: we were in the U.S., and we were like fish out of water. We didn't know what to do, and we had common problem- adjustment problem" (Interview, April 21, 1998).
- "When you first go to the U.S., you feel lonely and you want to be with people from your own culture and who speak your own language. Therefore, when I went there I had close contact with Turkish Students Association in my

university" (Interview, March 18, 1998).

One informant mentioned her psychological disorders in her first month. She stated that she had amnesia; she kept forgetting names and that she felt the threat of the unknown. It is interesting to note that this informant was a graduate of the department of American culture and she was elated at being in the United States. However, she attributed these problems to her personal situation. She was newly married and had left her husband behind in Turkey. She was also experiencing living alone for the first time in her life (Interview, March 19, 1998).

Another informant responded differently to life in the U.S.: she could not go out of her room for a week. She explained her problem as follows:

"You don't have a routine there, it's not part of your life, and you have to acquire that routine. I found it extremely difficult to do that and you definitely look for a Turk to rely on" (Interview, April 25, 1998).

#### Adjustment to life in the U.S.

During the interviews and in their answers to Question 20 in the e-mailed questionnaire (See Appendix B), the informants described the changes they made in

their behavior or lifestyle in order to adjust to the "differences" they perceived in U.S. culture.

The data were analyzed in the same manner as the data regarding the informants' perceptions of U.S. culture. That is, the data were coded and organized around topics. The major code categories were shown in bold type and the subcategories were indented and preceded by a hyphen.

Table 7 displays the code categories and their acronyms for the informants' adjustment patterns:

TABLE 7

Code Categories and their Acronyms for Turkish Students' Adjustment Patterns

Acronyms	Code Categories
<b>IDP</b>	Independent
<b>SDI</b>	Self-disciplined
<b>OMI &amp; TOL</b>	Open-minded & Tolerant
<b>DIR</b>	Direct
<b>ALO</b>	Alone
<b>LEM</b>	Less emotional
<b>SPO</b>	Sporty

As Table 7 indicates, there are seven categories with regard to the changes the informants made in their behavior or lifestyle in order to adjust to life in the United States.



In Figure 6, the findings are displayed through the frequencies of categories and selected quotations that fit under each category are displayed. The quotations written in Turkish were translated into English. In some quotations, pronoun and adverb references were indicated in parentheses for clarification of meaning:

FIGURE 6

The Changes Turkish Students Made in Their Lifestyle in Adjustment to U.S. Culture

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations from E-mailed Questionnaire & Interviews
IDP	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I learned to be self-sufficient in every manner of life.</li> <li>• I got used to taking care of myself. Everything is your responsibility in the U.S.</li> <li>• Before coming to the U.S., I was dependent on my parents; but here I had to learn to stand alone.</li> <li>• Well, it's a whole new life... I learned to survive individually, manage 100% of my money, etc. I have my own place to live, a nice car, and I travel a lot with small amounts of money.</li> <li>• I had to learn living on my own, away from my family and I'm enjoying it. I also have a great deal of freedom. Believe me, it's kind of hard to have this much freedom and make a wise use of it. Sometimes you almost miss your parents' interference so that you wouldn't make mistakes. But it's still valuable, you've got to grow up.</li> <li>• The responsibilities I handle here are much more than the ones in Turkey. Before coming to the U.S. I had lived with my family my entire life. Here (in the U.S.) I am flying with my own wings! Earning my money, cooking my food, making my own decisions... More independent... More responsible.</li> </ul>
SDI	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have become more disciplined, both academically and personally.</li> <li>• I have to discipline myself so that I can keep up with the courses. Studying in the last moment doesn't work here. (in the U.S.)</li> </ul>

- I became more disciplined, I need to plan my time. I need to be capable of working under pressure and stress and run around.
- OMI & TOL**      9
- I became open-minded. I'm still surprized with myself. When I was here (in Turkey), I wasn't that flexible. I had a set of mind, and I always believed that whatever I was doing was right. But in the U.S., and this is what I appreciate about the U.S., those people are flexible, at least even though they don't agree with you, they give you a chance to express your idea. At the beginning I realized that that I was just like a kid! So I became flexible. I changed totally.
  - I became more tolerant of different things, and more open minded.
  - Yeah, the most striking alteration in my life, I reckon, is that I am now much more open-minded than I used to be, tolerating other people's ideas and so on.
  - I learned to respect other people's choice even if it is against your religious beliefs and your way of life.
- DIR**      2
- I became more direct with people. At first I found it really hurtful and rude when people came and talked me straightforwardly. Later I realized that being straightforward is much better than being indirect.
  - I had to learn to be rude to people because honesty is very important for Americans. Americans do not usually backstab each other as much as Turks do. I don't mean that Turks are mean, but in order to be kind and friendly, they sometimes spare their actual opinions about their friends, relatives or colleagues, but after they leave, they start talking behind their backs, which, in my opinion, is very rare among Americans.
- ALO**      6
- I have to spend time alone
  - In Turkey I enjoyed doing things with my friends. Here (in the U.S.), started to lead a solitary life, I go to most of the places alone.
  - You need to learn to entertain yourself and live almost 100% on your own and be ready for loneliness!
- LEM**      2
- I became less emotional
  - I'm not as emotional as I used to be, and I care less about other people.
- SPO**      3
- The time I spend doing sports is much more than I did in Turkey.
  - I became more concerned with my health and I do exercise regularly now.

- |            |   |   |
|------------|---|---|
| <b>FOO</b> | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I had to get used to eating what I can find here. I cannot find the same vegetables, meat, especially fish that I used to eat in Turkey.</li> <li>• You need to adjust to different types of food. Especially when you order food in restaurants, it's like puzzle. There're so many varieties and things that go together.</li> </ul> |
|------------|---|---|

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Note. **IDP**= Independent, **SDI**= Self-disciplined, **OMI & TOL**= Open-minded & Tolerant, **DIR**= Direct, **ALO**= Alone, **LEM**= Less Emotional, **SPO**= Sports, **FOO**= Food

It is clear in Figure 6 that living in the U.S. provided the opportunity for the informants to experience living away from their families and to take full responsibility for their own lives. The informants' attitudes towards becoming more independent seems to be positive. However, some informants expressed feelings of loneliness that can be the outcome of their independence.

Some informants stated that they grew more tolerant and open-minded. This might be related to the diverse social structure of the U.S. and the importance given to freedom of expression, which in turn might have a positive effect on the Turkish students, coming from a monolingual and monocultural country.

One other informant's answer to this question, which is not displayed in Figure 6, is interesting. This informant stated that he was trying to accept things as they were and not to think about them. He also stated that he concentrated on sports and he socialized with other Turkish students through Turkish Students'

Association. Moreover, it is interesting to note that this informant was one of those who almost never socialized with American people.

Another informant stated that she kept her social contact with American people at minimum because she found it "too difficult to accomplish two things (achievement in social and academic life) at the same time." Again, this student was among those who almost never socialized with Americans but almost everyday with Turks.

Two informants also added that they were trying to think in the same way as Americans do and to act like Americans.

Of all the informants, four people stated that there were no major changes in their lifestyle, three people indicated that nothing changed in their life-style at all. One informant stated that he still had not been able to figure out what kind of changes he had gone through, and two informants did not answer the question.

#### Communication Difficulties

During the interviews and in Question 21 in the e-mailed questionnaire, the informants were asked to describe a particular incident in which they experienced a communication failure when they first went to the United States (See Appendices A and B).

According to the results of the analysis of the questionnaire, ten (22.7%) informants experienced a communication failure while speaking, ten (22.7%) had problems in understanding American people and twelve (27.3%) informants experienced problems both in speaking and understanding the English language. Thirteen (28.9%) informants stated that they did not experience any kind of communication failure. Similarly, of the six informants who were interviewed, four informants experienced communication problems while speaking, and two had a difficulty in understanding.

The data analysis below presents the results from both the e-mailed questionnaire and the interviews under three headings, without making a distinction between the two groups of informants..

Speaking - conversational English, pronunciation and vocabulary. Of the six informants who were interviewed and those who were sent the questionnaire through e-mail, fourteen informants stated that their problems in speaking stemmed from their mispronunciation of certain words, a lack of conversational practice and limited vocabulary knowledge. Some informants expressed their feelings about speaking problems as follows:

"I had a difficulty in expressing myself and answering questions in class because I didn't know enough vocabulary, so I preferred to keep silent in class."

Another informant stated that she could not express herself as well as an American does, and in class she felt really bad when her American classmate's proposal was welcomed with enthusiasm while the same proposal was made by her earlier and attracted nobody's attention.

One informant mentioned his lack of knowledge and practice in daily, conversational English:

"I usually tried to make complete sentences, much like sentences in a book as opposed to conversational language. For example, I didn't know how to say "kolami buzzuz istiyorum", so I used to say "I want coke but please do not put ice in it" instead of "Coke, no ice please."

Other common problematic area for the informants was pronunciation:

"I was in a supermarket and I kept trying to say 'pizza'. I tried many ways and still couldn't make myself clear, that was so annoying."

One informant mentioned his "embarrassing" experience, in which he asked his friend to give him a piece of 'shit' instead of 'sheet'.

Understanding fast speech, slang and different accents. Twelve informants had communication difficulties due to not being able to understand fast speech and different accents, especially the accents of uneducated people and African-American people at fast food restaurants, supermarkets and so on. Below are some instances the informants mentioned in relation to their experiences:

- "The first months in the US, English doesn't sound like English. It's like they speak completely another language."
- "At McDonald's you cannot understand what the cashier says, so you just say, "Give me Number 1 menu, please, nothing else."

The informants ascribed these difficulties to not having been exposed to fast speech, different accents, slang and commonly used idioms and expressions before going to the United States.

Cultural differences. Some informants mentioned communication difficulties they experienced due to cultural differences. One informant made the following remark:

"Since the way of life is different, the way they think is different; thus, the way they (Americans)

understand us and we understand them are different until we totally understand their ways."

Another informant stated that she had communication problems in various situations and attributed these problems to having a "different cultural background and misinterpreting what was said or expected of [her]."

Similarly, another informant was of the opinion that it is not a good idea to make sarcastic remarks to people you do not know very well because "sometimes they tend to take it too seriously." This informant viewed the reason for his observation as "different sense of humour due to different cultures."

The informants who mentioned the misinterpretation of what was said believed that the reason for these problems was their lack of knowledge of American "way of life".

The findings of Question 22 in the e-mailed questionnaire, displayed in Table 8, summarize the situations in which the informants had difficulties while communicating with American people when they first went to the United States. This question also aimed at revealing the situations that still created communication problems for the informants at the time of this study.



In Table 8, the frequencies and percentages were provided for each situation in which the informants had difficulty communicating with American people, both when they first went to the U.S. and at the time of study:

TABLE 8

The Situations in which the Informants had Difficulties  
Communicating with American People (N=44)

Situations	Past		Present	
	N	%	N	%
Understanding fast speech	31	(73.8%)	8	(19.0%)
Ordering food or drink	25	(59.5%)	4	(11.4%)
Talking on the Phone	25	(59.5%)	2	(4.8%)
Starting a conversation with Americans in a social gathering	20	(47.6%)	7	(16.7%)
Talking to lecturers, professors, advisers	19	(45.2%)	3	(7.1%)
Other-understanding various accents, slang, idioms and expressions	16	(36.3%)	6	(13.6%)
Making an appointment	16	(38.1%)	1	(2.4%)
Expressing your opinions in discussions during lectures	15	(35.7%)	4	(9.5%)
Opening a bank account	15	(35.7%)	0	(0.0%)
Asking Questions during lectures	13	(31.0%)	3	(7.1%)
Making friends among American people	13	(31.0%)	3	(7.1%)
Going shopping	13	(31.0%)	0	(0.0%)
Using public transportation	13	(31.0%)	0	(0.0%)
Asking somebody to go out on a date	11	(26.2%)	4	(9.5%)

Accepting/refusing an invitation, offer or suggestion	11 (26.2%)	2 (4.8%)
Expressing invitations	7 (16.7%)	0 (0.0%)
Using a credit card	1 (2.4%)	0 (0.0%)

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Note: In this table the original order of the situations (See Appendix B) was changed according to the analysis and rearranged in a descending order of the frequencies for ease of interpretation.

As can be seen in Table 8, the informants had the most difficulty understanding fast speech, ordering food or drink, talking on the phone, starting a conversation with Americans in a social gathering and talking to lecturers, professors and advisers.

The situations in which the informants still had the most difficulty at the time of the study were, again, understanding fast speech, ordering food or drink, starting a conversation with Americans in a social gathering and understanding various accents and people using slang. It is interesting to note that greater number of informants could get over their difficulties in talking on the phone and understanding fast speech than that of the informants who had difficulty understanding various accents and slang.

### Perceived Reasons for Communication Difficulties

Question 23 of the e-mailed questionnaire asked the informants to rank-order the reasons for the communication problems they encountered in the United States. The aim of this question was to determine to what extent the informants thought unfamiliarity with U.S. culture played an important role.

The data analysis is displayed in Table 9 in terms of percentages of the frequencies and means of the items.

TABLE 9

#### The Informants' Ranking of the Reasons for their Communication Difficulties (N=24)

Reasons	1	2	3	4	5	<u>M</u>
Limited vocabulary and unfamiliar idioms & expressions	50.0%	25.5%	4.2%	20.8%	0.0%	2.0
Unfamiliarity with U.S. socio-cultural values	13.6%	33.3%	33.3%	13.6%	4.5%	2.6
Inability to use appropriate language in conversation	18.9%	25.0%	33.3%	8.3%	12.5%	2.7
Inability to interpret body language	8.3%	8.3%	13.6%	41.7%	25.0%	3.7
Insufficient knowledge of grammar rules	8.3%	8.3%	12.5%	12.5%	58.3%	4.0

Note. 1= The most important, 5= The least important

The data analysis revealed that the informants ranked the item 'limited vocabulary and unfamiliar idioms and expressions' as the most important (M= 2.0). This item is related to the informants' problems in both

speaking and understanding that were mentioned in the previous sub-section.

The second most important reason indicated by the informants for their communication problems is the unfamiliarity with U.S. socio-cultural values ( $\underline{M}$ = 2.6) and the third most important reason is the inability to use appropriate language in conversation ( $\underline{M}$ = 2.7).

It is not surprising that the informants ranked insufficient knowledge of grammar rules as the least important ( $M$ = 4.0) since the informants still had communication problems despite the fact that they had the knowledge of grammar rules - the language area that they had been taught all their school years in Turkey.

This section presented an analysis of the data, in terms of U.S. experience, from the Turkish students who were in the United States at the time of study and those who have been in the United States. In the next section, analysis of the data from the third group of informants will be presented.

#### Perceptions of Culture Based on Anticipated Experience

A hundred and forty-two students attending a language course at the DBE, METU were given a close-ended questionnaire (See Appendix C). The questionnaire was

constructed in light of the data obtained from the first two groups of informants, who had the experience of living in the United States. Consisting of 14 questions, this questionnaire aimed at gaining insight into the informants' assumptions about their needs in relation to their future life in the United States.

The findings are displayed under four headings; namely, description of the informants, familiarity with U.S. culture, assumptions about communication difficulties and, finally, assumptions about the reasons for communication difficulties.

#### Description of Informants

Of the one hundred and forty-two informants, 110 (77.5%) were male and 32 (22.5%) were female. A hundred and seventeen (82.4%) informants were between ages 23-28. Of the 142 informants, 14 (9.9%) were married or engaged.

Eighty-two (57.7%) informants were from the four biggest cities of Turkey, which are Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, and 60 (42.3%) informants were from other 32 cities and towns. With the exception of one informant, all the informants graduated from 23 different Turkish-medium universities in various parts of Turkey, some of which were established within the last few years.

### Familiarity with U.S. Culture

Questions 7 and 8 were asked to obtain information about the extent to which the informants were familiar with U.S. culture. These questions were in a Likert-scale format, with 1=almost 0%, 2=very little, 3= some, 4= a lot, 5= almost 100%. The items in Question 7 were grouped under three headings, which are daily life, social life and academic life. The item that asked to what extent the informants were familiar with the legal obligations that they had to fulfill when they went to the U.S. was asked separately in Question 8 in order to make the meaning clearer for the informants (See Appendix C). However, this item was analyzed together with the other items in Question 7 and is displayed as 'legal obligations' in Table 10 under the heading 'Daily Life'.

The results were calculated by taking the percentage of the frequency of responses for each item. In addition, the means for each item were calculated and findings were interpreted through the mean of the means in order to have an overall idea of the informants' degree of familiarity with U.S. culture.

The analysis of the results is summarized in two categories. Table 10 displays the informants' degree of familiarity with U.S. culture in terms of daily and social life and of academic life.

Table 10

The Informants' Degree of Familiarity with U.S. Culture  
in terms of Daily, Social, and Academic Life N= 142)

Items	1	2	3	4	5	<u>M</u>
<u>Daily Life</u>						
Shopping	20.4%	49.3%	28.2%	2.1%	0.0%	2.1
Public transport	27.5%	47.9%	19.0%	5.6%	0.0%	2.0
Traffic regulations	24.6%	40.1%	28.9%	5.6%	0.7%	2.2
Accommodation types	30.3%	43.7%	21.1%	3.5%	1.4%	2.0
Public institutions & services	54.2%	34.5%	7.7%	3.5%	0.0%	1.6
Legal obligations	59.9%	29.6%	8.5%	2.1%	0.0%	1.5
<u>Social Life</u>						
Family life	12.0%	46.5%	31.7%	9.2%	1.4%	2.4
Personal relationships	11.3%	41.5%	35.9%	11.3%	0.0%	2.5
Customs	38.0%	40.1%	17.6%	3.5%	0.7%	1.9
Working life	24.6%	45.1%	23.2%	6.3%	0.7%	2.1
National holidays	39.4%	40.8%	14.8%	4.9%	0.0%	1.9
Religion	12.0%	40.1%	38.0%	7.7%	2.1%	2.5
Entertainment	13.4%	35.9%	36.7%	13.4%	0.7%	2.5
Sports facilities	14.1%	35.4%	33.1%	14.8%	2.1%	2.5
<u>ΣM= 2.1</u>						
<u>Academic Life</u>						
Universities	16.2%	38.0%	28.9%	13.4%	3.5%	2.5
Academic requirements	19.7%	36.7%	29.6%	12.7%	1.4%	2.4

System of assessment	35.9%	36.7%	20.4%	6.3%	0.7%	2.0
Educational resources	21.8%	40.1%	22.5%	11.3%	4.2%	2.4
<hr/>						
$\Sigma M = 2.3$						
<hr/>						
Note. 1= almost 0%, 2= very little, 3= some, 4= a lot, 5= almost 100%						

Table 10 indicates that, overall, the informants had a low degree of familiarity with U.S. culture in terms of both daily and social life ( $\Sigma M = 2.1$ ) and academic life ( $\Sigma M = 2.3$ ).

The informants were also asked what they were doing, apart from attending the language course at METU, in order to prepare for life in the U.S. (See Appendix C, Question 10). Of the 142 informants, 28 (19.7%) stated that they were not doing anything else, and 114 (80.3%) of them indicated the things they were doing by choosing from the items provided. Since some of the informants indicated more than one option, the analysis is presented in terms of frequencies of items.

According to the results, obtaining information about the U.S. from the people who had studied in the U.S. and going through university prospectuses were the most frequently chosen items. The other items chosen by the informants, in descending frequency, are reading about the U.S., following the American media and attending another language course.



Assumptions about Communication Difficulties in the U.S.

Question 11 asked the informants in which situations they assumed that they would experience communication difficulties when they went to the United States. The question was prepared in a three-scale format, with 1= causing the most difficulty, 2= causing some difficulty and 3= causing no difficulty at all.

In Table 11 below, each situation was analyzed in terms of the mean and the percentage of the frequency at each scale point. For ease of reading, the situations displayed in Table 11 were re-ordered in a descending frequency order, starting with the one in which the informants assumed that they would have the most difficulty while communicating with American people.

TABLE 11  
The Situations in which the Informants Assume they would  
Have Communication Difficulties (N=142)

Situations	1	2	3	M
Understanding various accents and slang	81.7%	13.6%	0.7%	1.2
Understanding fast speech	75.3%	23.9%	0.7%	1.3
Expressing your opinions in discussions during lectures	47.2%	40.1%	12.7%	1.7
Asking Questions during lectures	36.7%	43.7%	19.7%	1.8
Taking notes during lectures	32.4%	53.5%	14.1%	1.8
Talking on the Phone	28.9%	62.7%	8.5%	1.8
Starting a conversation with Americans in a social gathering	28.2%	58.5%	13.4%	1.9
Using a credit card	26.8%	51.4%	21.8%	2.0
Talking to lecturers, professors, advisers	23.2%	57.0%	19.7%	2.0
Opening a bank account	22.5%	57.7%	19.7%	2.0
Using computer	17.6%	40.1%	47.6%	2.2
Making friends among American people	10.6%	63.4%	26.1%	2.2
Asking somebody to go out on a date *	12.7%	47.6%	39.7%	2.3
Making an appointment	10.6%	52.8%	36.7%	2.3
Expressing invitations	6.9%	55.6%	38.0%	2.3
Using public transportation	5.6%	45.8%	48.6%	2.4
Ordering food or drink	3.5%	48.6%	47.9%	2.4
Accepting/refusing an invitation, offer or suggestion	3.5%	43.7%	52.8%	2.5
Going shopping	2.1%	45.1%	52.8%	2.5

Note. \* The number of informants who responded to this item is 126.

As can be observed in Table 11, the informants think that the situations that would cause the most difficulty while communicating with American people are understanding different accents and slang ( $\underline{M}= 1.2$ ) and fast speech ( $\underline{M}=1.3$ ), expressing opinions in discussions ( $\underline{M}= 1.7$ ), asking questions ( $\underline{M}= 1.8$ ) and taking notes during lectures ( $\underline{M}= 1.8$ ). This reveals that the informants are more concerned with academic life than daily and social life.

Table 11 also reveals a significant difference in the order of the some situations in comparison to the findings from the first two groups of informants, who actually experienced communication difficulties in the U.S. For instance, while ordering food or drink and talking on the phone were the among the most problematic situations for 59.5% of the informants in the U.S., only 3.5% of the informants at the DBE, METU assume that ordering food and drink would cause the most difficulty, and only 28.9% think that talking on the telephone would cause a lot of difficulty.

In Question 11, only the item 'asking someone to go out on a date' was left unanswered by sixteen informants. It is interesting to note that, of these sixteen informants, 11 of them were the single female informants. This finding supports the opinion of one informant about

Turkish girls' attitude towards relationships in relation to cultural differences between the U.S. and Turkey (See Figure 2, page 59). According to this informant's observations, Turkish girls are shy and do not take the initiative in starting a relationship.

As for the other 6 informants who did not respond to the item mentioned, 4 of them were married and 2 were engaged.

#### Assumptions about the Reasons for Communication

##### Difficulties

Question 12 aimed to impart the informants' opinions about the reasons for communication difficulties. The informants were asked to rank-order the reasons for the communication problems.

Table 12 displays the data analysis in terms the percentage of the frequency and the mean for each item.

TABLE 12

The informants' Ranking of the Reasons for Communication Difficulties (N=124)

Reasons	1	2	3	4	5	<u>M</u>
Inability to use appropriate language in conversation	50.8%	25.8%	9.7%	7.3%	6.5%	1.9
Limited vocabulary & unfamiliar idioms and expressions	17.7%	40.3%	17.7%	21.0%	3.2%	2.5
Unfamiliarity with U.S. socio-cultural values	14.5%	14.5%	19.4%	25.0%	26.6%	3.3
Insufficient knowledge of grammar rules	14.5%	10.5%	29.0%	21.8%	24.2%	3.3
Inability to interpret body language	3.2%	8.1%	24.2%	24.2%	40.3%	3.9

Note. 1= The most important, 5= The least important

The informants ranked the ability to use appropriate language in conversation as the most important (M= 1.9), followed by limited vocabulary and unfamiliarity with idioms and expressions (M= 2.5), and unfamiliarity with U.S. socio-cultural values (M= 3.3).

Body language, on the other hand, was considered as the least important among the reasons for communication difficulty.

The findings from the informants with U.S. experience in Table 9 (See page 85) show similarities to the data in Table 12. Both groups of informants ranked the same items as the most three important reasons for

communication difficulties. However, while the informants with U.S. experience ranked unfamiliarity with U.S. culture as the second most important reason, the informants at METU thought that this item comes after the inability to use appropriate language in conversation and unfamiliarity with idioms and expressions. In addition, the informants with U.S. experience think that insufficient knowledge of grammar rules is the least important for communication difficulties whereas for the informants at METU, inability to interpret body language is the least important.

This section presented the data from the informants at METU in terms of their anticipated experience in the United States.

### Language Courses

In this chapter, the first two sections of the data analysis presented the actual experiences of the first two groups of informants in the U.S., and the assumptions of the informants at METU about their life in the U.S. preceding their residence.

This third section presents the informants' opinions about the English language course at METU and, finally, their suggestions for future language courses that would be most beneficial to Turkish students in preparing them

for the life in the United States. The data analysis will be presented under two headings: former and on-going language courses and suggested future language courses.

#### Former and On-going Language Courses

Former and on-going language courses refer to the English language courses at the DBE, METU, which the informants had taken or were taking at the time of study before going to the United States. Data reveals the informants' opinions in terms of the extent to which they benefited from the course in certain knowledge and skills (See Appendix B, Questions 17 & 18).

The data were obtained from all three groups of informants. As has been in the earlier sections of this study, the first two groups will be treated as one group.

#### Former Language Courses

Of forty-five informants in the United States, only 16 (35.6%) informants took the language course at METU since they were sponsored by the Ministry of Education. Of the six informants who have been in the United States, only one informant took the same course. Table 13 below displays the data analysis of the 16 informants' opinions of the language course they attended previously.

TABLE 13

Opinions of the Former Language Course (N= 16)

Benefits	5	4	3	2	1	<u>M</u>
I benefited greatly from the course in terms of:						
grammar rules	81.3%	12.5%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8
reading skills	31.3%	62.5%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3
vocabulary	43.8%	31.3%	12.5%	12.5%	0.0%	4.1
listening skills	25.0%	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	3.6
academic writing skills	18.8%	25.0%	18.8%	25.0%	12.5%	3.1
conversational skills	12.5%	18.8%	37.5%	25.0%	6.3%	3.1
gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between U.S. & Turkish ways of life	0.0%	24.0%	37.5%	12.5%	25.0%	2.6

Note. 5= Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Uncertain, 2= Disagree,  
1= Strongly disagree

According to the results, 93.8% of the informants strongly agree and agree that they benefited from the course in terms of knowledge of grammar rules (M= 4.8) and reading skills (M= 4.3). Of the sixteen informants, 37.5% do not think that they gained awareness of the differences and similarities between U.S. and Turkish ways of life and another 37.5% of the informants are not sure (M= 2.6).



Overall, the informants were uncertain whether the course was beneficial in terms of academic writing and conversational skills ( $\bar{M}$ = 3.1).

The results in Table 13 seem to support the informants' ranking of the reasons for their communication difficulties in Table 9, where the informants think the most important reasons for the communication difficulties they experienced in the U.S. were a lack of conversational skills and unfamiliarity with U.S. culture. In addition, the informants agree that the course was useful in terms of grammar rules, which ranked the least important as a reason for communication difficulties in the U.S.

It is also interesting to note the informants' attitude towards the language course that they attended. Of the returned students, the informant who attended the courses at METU before he went to the United States in 1991, expressed his attitude towards the course and his state of mind at the time as follows:

"I guess you do not take the course seriously, because you always have the impression - "I'm never going to learn English here. I'll do it when I go to the U.S." (Interview, April 21, 1998).

One informant of the e-mailed questionnaire also admitted that the course was useful in terms of grammar

and reading skills. He also expressed his attitude towards the course in the same way as the informant of the interview: " I thought I didn't need to learn English at METU since I was going to study in the U.S. and I could certainly learn English by myself. However, I was totally wrong... I think the course was very useful in terms of teaching the basic rules of the language."

#### On-going Language Courses

The students started the course at METU in March 1998 and the length of the course was determined according to the informants' level of English. The informants at upper-intermediate level, for example, will finish the course in July 1998 whereas those at beginners' level will continue attending the course until December 1998. The main aim of the course is to prepare the students for the TOEFL exams, which is the initial requirement for acceptance to the universities in the U.S.

Table 14 below displays the analysis of the informants' responses in relation to their opinions about the on-going course that they are attending at METU.

TABLE 14

Opinions of the On-going Language Course (N= 142)

Benefits	5	4	3	2	1	<u>M</u>
I benefit greatly from the course in terms of:						
grammar rules	35.2%	51.4%	9.2%	4.2%	0.0%	4.2
vocabulary	21.1%	47.2%	23.9%	7.0%	0.7%	3.8
reading skills	21.8%	45.8%	23.2%	7.7%	1.4%	3.8
listening skills	10.6%	41.5%	30.3%	14.8%	2.8%	3.4
conversational skills	9.2%	38.7%	31.7%	16.9%	3.5%	3.3
academic writing skills	7.0%	26.8%	33.1%	26.1%	7.0%	3.0
gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between U.S. & Turkish ways of life	4.9%	12.0%	27.5%	38.0%	17.6%	2.5
gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between U.S. & Turkish education systems	2.1%	12.0%	25.4%	38.0%	22.5%	2.3

Note. 5= Strongly agree, 4=Agree, 3= Uncertain, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly disagree

According to the results of the analysis, 86.6% of the informants agree and strongly agree that they benefit from the course in terms of knowledge of grammar rules (M= 4.1). In addition to grammar, 68.3% of the informants acknowledge the benefit of the course in terms of vocabulary (M= 3.8), and 67.6% of the informants were of the opinion that they benefited from the course in terms of reading skills (M=3.8).

In terms of gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between Turkish and U.S. cultures, about half of the informants (55.6%) do not think that the course provide this awareness.

The comparison of the results in Table 14 with those in Table 13 reveals that both the informants in the U.S. who previously took the language course at METU and the informants attending the on-going course agree about the emphasized skills and knowledge. With the exception of academic writing and conversational skills, all the other course topics are ranked in the same order of frequency. That is, both groups of informants agree that they benefit from the course most in terms of grammar, reading skills and vocabulary. Similarly, neither group agrees that the course enhanced or enhances their awareness of U.S. culture.

#### Suggested Future Language Courses

All three groups of informants were asked their opinions of the topics of a language course that prepares Turkish students for life in the United States. Qualitative data were obtained from the informants living in the U.S. and from those who have been in the U.S. through the interviews and open-ended questions in the e-mailed questionnaire.

The suggestions of these informants for course topics were analyzed and coded into ten major categories. These categories were used for the same question in the close-ended questionnaire (See Appendix C, Question 13), in which the informants at METU were asked to select those that they think would be most beneficial for them.

This section presents the analysis of the data for course topics of a language course suggested by both the informants who experienced living in the U.S. and those who were preparing to go to the U.S.

#### Informants with U.S. Experience

The data from the interviews and e-mailed questionnaire were analyzed together. Table 15 below displays the code categories and their acronyms for suggested future language courses. The acronyms in bold type show the major code categories and those indented with a hyphen in front represent the sub-categories.

TABLE 15

Code Categories and their Acronyms for Suggested Language Courses

Acronyms	Code Categories
<b>WEX</b>	Words and expressions that are frequently used in daily life.
<b>COS</b>	<b>Conversational Skills</b>
-RLP	Role-plays of situations in daily life to enhance conversational skills
-CCA	Conversation classes with American people
<b>LIS</b>	Listening exercises that give examples of a variety of English usage (accents, slang, etc.)
<b>EOT</b>	Opportunities to learn about the experiences of Turkish people studying in the U.S.
<b>CUL</b>	<b>U.S. Culture</b>
-VID	Videos and discussions related to U.S. culture
-DIF	Information about differences in Turkish and U.S. culture
-ADV	Advice on culture shock and psychological problems frequently encountered by foreign students in the U.S.
<b>PIN</b>	Practical Information about daily life procedures and legal obligations
<b>AGE</b>	Seminars given preferably by American teachers concerning graduate education, universities, student responsibilities, computer labs, libraries and other resources in the U.S.
<b>AWS</b>	Academic writing skills
<b>PRS</b>	Practicing presentation skills, research skills and group work
<b>GRA</b>	More grammar rules

Figure 7 presents the data analysis with respect to suggested language courses. For each category, the frequency and selected quotations were displayed. The quotations written in Turkish were translated into English, and in some quotations, pronoun references were indicated in parentheses for clarification of meaning.

FIGURE 7

Course Topics for Future Language Courses Suggested by Informants with U.S. Experience

Code Category	Frequency	Selected Quotations
<b>WEX</b>	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily idioms and expressions.</li> <li>• A lot of expressions like "What's up?" or "How's it going?" instead of "How are you?".</li> <li>• I would teach them (Turkish students) words and expressions and some slang that are commonly used in daily, conversational English since it is very important to be able to understand people's jokes.</li> <li>• I'd prepare a little booklet of English phrases and idioms that Americans use a lot. For example, I didn't know what "buck" means and they use "calling card" for "telefon karti". I used to say "phone card" (I translated it directly from Turkish ☺).</li> <li>• Nobody says "How do you do" or "How are you", so teach me "Hey, how is it going?", "Hey, what's up?", "What have you been up to?". Teach me the spoken language, not the written one in the textbooks. I guess this is what I would certainly include in the course.</li> <li>• It is better to teach American English in Turkey, not British English. No one uses "cinema" in the USA, they use "movie", for example.</li> </ul>
<b>COS</b>		
-RLP	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'd set up an environment in which they can practice daily conversational skills like how to order food in a restaurant, how to call a cab at the airport, how to ask for directions, etc.</li> </ul>

- I would get them (Turkish students) to play sketches as if they are in a restaurant, in a bank, on the phone, etc. and teach them how to order food how to open a bank account, etc.
  - Maybe something around role-plays would be very nice. For example, shopping. Other things like speech acts, how to refuse people politely.
  - The course must be part of the real life, it should simulate the real life in class. Create the situation in the classroom, give people some roles. When I go to the U.S., what do I need?. Let's say, I arrived at the JFK airport, I have to go through passport control, right? They have to create that artificial environment for me so that I would feel like I'm facing an officer at the airport. They have to teach me what to say. "Now, let's order lunch, let's order breakfast. For example, I was buying my first blue jeans in the U.S. I didn't know how to say "Can I try this on?", "Where's the fitness room?". You have the blue jeans with you and you just look at it.
  - Practice speaking- Forget about the grammar and just teach daily, conversational language.
- CWA            10
- Discussion groups led by American people.
  - Bring an American to class to chat with the students.
  - I'd bring in one Chinese, one Afro-American who uses slang, and one American who uses daily conversational English and get the students to talk with these people from morning till the evening.
  - It might be very useful to bring Americans to conversation classes. It can render substantial improvement in students' listening and speaking skills.
- LIS                7
- Listening to tapes in which American people converse on different subject might be useful to get used to their speech.
  - I would give the students practice in listening to various accents.
  - My biggest problem was understanding fast speech and people with accent and people using street language, about which I had no idea at all. Therefore, I would emphasize these through listening exercises.
- EOT                10
- I'd bring in Turkish students who have studied in the U.S. and get them to talk about everything!!! - school, life outside school, the "American way" of doing things, etc.



- I could be of more help to those students if I were there (in Turkey) in class and the students asked me a bunch of questions about the life in the USA. I hope one day I'll have the opportunity to do this and help the students who are going to the USA.
- I would bring in the (Turkish) students who lived in the USA recently.
- I would invite people who lived in the U.S. to class, and ask them to talk about their experiences, like what you (the researcher) are doing now.

**CUL**

-VID

6

- I'd show them (Turkish students) videos about a regular day of an average American family to have an idea about a typical American family and U.S. culture. It would be helpful for them in forming their expectations.
- Videos about U.S. life could be shown to give the students an idea about what they will see when they go to the U.S.
- I would show them videos of a typical classroom setting, shopping mall, grocery store, basically anything that will encompass what they will be encountering all at once when they arrive here (in the U.S.).

-DIF

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- I'd include (in the course) information on cultural differences between Turkey and the U.S.
- I'd invite Americans living in Turkey and Turks living in the U.S., who had acknowledged the differences between the two countries. And I'd ask them to give their own perceptions of the differences between the two cultures.
- I'd teach them some U.S. socio-cultural values that are significantly different from those of the Turkish.
- A tutorial on U.S. socio-cultural structure would be great. People living in one country determine the language.
- Information on the social structure of the U.S. - different ethnic and religious groups in the society. Unlike Turkey, there are so many different kinds of people from different cultures.
- I would give a brief history of the U.S. There are very important events in the U.S. history that gave shape to the U.S. culture and I believe that knowledge of these would be of great help for people who will live among Americans.

- |      |    |   |
|------|----|---|
| -ADV | 5  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They (Turkish students) should be made aware that they will be going through acculturation and that this is natural.</li> <li>• I'd teach them how to cope with the different expectations of Americans of them, both in social and academic life.</li> <li>• I'd tell them that they are bound to go through difficulties when they go there (to the U.S.) and that they shouldn't worry about it because it is only temporary.</li> <li>• I'd teach them to stay calm whatever might happen.</li> </ul>  |
| PIN  | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'd give practical information about daily life procedures such as how to order food, get a driver's licence, open a bank account, get a credit card, buy a car, rent an apartment, etc.</li> <li>• Practical information like how to get a tax identification number, etc.</li> <li>• I'd give information about regional public transportation, banking, etc. Transportation is a problem, so they want to have learn how to drive. I would also make sure that they know how to do all those household chores such as cooking, doing laundry, cleaning.</li> <li>• I'd definitely prepare something like Fulbright's orientation sessions in Turkey and in the U.S., without which I would have faced more difficulties. This seminar included almost everything about the U.S. social and academic life, and it helped me a lot in adjusting to the new society.</li> <li>• I'd also try to teach them how to open a checking account and write checks, receive checks, balance a checkbook and I'd explain why it is important to memorize their social security number.</li> </ul> |
| AGE  | 5  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'd provide the students with resources where they can learn about the schools before they go to the U.S.</li> <li>• Complete information on U.S. education system and social life, and these courses should definitely be given by Americans.</li> <li>• I'd invite American college students and lecturers to give all kinds of information about universities, students responsibilities, and so on.</li> <li>• Information about how to choose the school you want-the location of the school, the cost, the programs they offer, the selection of a thesis adviser, etc.</li> <li>• All kinds of information about American graduate education system, given by American lecturers.</li> <li>• I'd give information about the computer labs, the internet and the libraries at universities.</li> </ul>   |

- |            |   |   |
|------------|---|---|
| <b>AWS</b> | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'd design writing courses in order to improve the students' academic writing skills; I'd especially teach how to write proposals, and how to show citations.</li> <li>• How to write academic papers. There was a writing course given to international students there (in the U.S.). My best friend used to teach that course. There were a lot of Turkish students on her course. They didn't know how to write an academic paper because it's not taught here in our universities. That's a very important skill, which they need to learn.</li> </ul> |
| <b>PRS</b> | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving presentations, how to speak in front of the audience because they need to do that.</li> <li>• Making research about anything and presenting it. The education system in Turkey doesn't require you to look for anything additional to the course material. I'd also teach how to survive in group projects.</li> <li>• Students might prepare term papers for oral presentation at the end of a semester, which is very important in their academic achievements.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>GRA</b> | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language courses in Turkey for grammar and vocabulary and courses in the U.S. for speaking and listening skills.</li> <li>• I'd teach grammar first.</li> </ul>  |

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Note. **WEX**= Words and expressions frequently used in daily life, **COS**= Conversational skills, **-RLP**= Role-plays of situations in daily life, **-CCA**= Conversation classes with American people, **LIS**= Listening exercises that give examples of a variety of English usage (accents, slang, etc.), **EOT**= Opportunities to learn about the experiences of Turkish people studying in the U.S., **CUL**= U.S. Culture, **-VID**= Videos and discussions related to U.S. culture, **-DIF**= Information about differences in Turkish and U.S. culture, **-ADV**= Advice on culture shock and psychological problems frequently encountered by foreign students in the U.S., **-ADV**= Advice on culture shock and psychological problems frequently encountered by foreign students in the U.S., **PIN**= Practical Information about daily life procedures and legal obligations, **AGE**= Seminars given by American teachers concerning graduate education, universities, student responsibilities, computer labs, libraries and other resources in the U.S., **AWS**= Academic writing skills, **PRS**= Practicing presentation skills, research skills and group work, **GRA**= More grammar rules.

Considering the frequency of each course topic, Figure 7 indicates that the informants suggest a language course that would primarily enhance students' awareness of U.S. socio-cultural values and oral communication skills that encompass conversational skills, understanding fast speech and different accents, and familiarity with commonly used idioms and expressions. The informants suggested, with the highest frequency, role-plays of daily life situations to practice conversational language.

Among the informants' suggestions, practical information about daily life procedures and legal obligations was another course topic with a high frequency. The informants think that students would also benefit from the experiences of former students who completed their studies in the U.S. and returned to Turkey.

Other suggestions with a relatively low frequency are related to students' graduate studies. These are, helping students to improve their academic writing and presentation skills, and providing them with information on the U.S. graduate study education system, universities, student responsibilities, libraries and so on.

Three informants in the United States and two of the informants who were interviewed mentioned the orientation sessions organized by the Fulbright Commission, both in Turkey and in the United States. The informants described these orientation sessions as "very well organized and full of useful information". They thought that these sessions were extremely helpful in raising their awareness of what they would confront with and what to expect when they went to the United States, and they suggested language courses the same as these sessions.

Fulbright's orientation sessions included lectures and videos on U.S. legal and political system, graduate education system, daily and social life, music and sports. In addition, the informants were provided with practical information related to daily life, ranging from accommodation facilities to how to open a bank account, how to do shopping, how to make an appointment with a doctor, professor, and so on. The informants were also given courses on preparing term papers, doing oral presentations, using the libraries, and so on.

It is obvious that the suggested course topics are closely related to the informants' experiences and communication difficulties they encountered in the United States. The difficulties these informants experienced due to lack of oral communication skills and cultural

differences were mentioned earlier in this chapter (See page 78). It is also obvious that the informants acknowledged the importance of awareness of the differences and similarities between U.S. and Turkish cultures.

#### Students at METU

In Question 13 of the close-ended questionnaire (See Appendix C) the informants at METU were provided with 13 items as course topics for future language courses. As mentioned earlier, these items were determined through the analysis of the data from the informants with U.S. experience (See Figure 7, page 105). Among the thirteen items provided, the informants were asked to select 7 of the items that they think would be most beneficial for them in preparation for life in the U.S.

Figure 8 displays the data analysis of the informants' preferred course topics for suggested future language courses in terms of frequencies. For ease of comparison, the acronyms for these items used in Figure 7 are also included. Note that the items were rearranged in a descending order of frequency in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8

Course Topics for Future Language Courses Suggested by  
Informants at METU

Acronyms	Frequency	Course Topics
<b>AGE</b>	117	Seminars given preferably by American teachers concerning graduate education, universities, student responsibilities, computer labs, libraries and other resources in the U.S.
<b>PIN</b>	104	Practical information about daily life procedures and legal obligations
<b>CON-CCA</b>	102	Conversation classes with American people
<b>WEX</b>	101	Words and expressions that are frequently used in daily life
<b>EOT</b>	83	Opportunities to learn about the experiences of Turkish people studying in the U.S.
<b>AWS</b>	80	Academic writing skills
<b>PRS</b>	70	Practicing presentation skills, research skills, and group work
<b>CUL-ADV</b>	57	Advice on culture shock and psychological problems frequently encountered by foreign students in the U.S.
<b>CUL-VID</b>	56	Videos and discussions related to U.S. culture
<b>GRA</b>	56	More grammar rules
<b>LIS</b>	54	Listening exercises that give examples of a variety of English usage (accents, slang, etc.)
<b>CUL-DIF</b>	46	Information about differences in Turkish and U.S. culture
<b>COS-RLP</b>	40	Role-plays of situations in daily life to enhance conversational skills

Note. The frequencies do not represent the number of informants.

Figure 8 reveals that the informants at METU suggested seminars on U.S. graduate study education system with the most frequency, which is followed by practical information about daily life procedures and legal obligations. Other two course topics suggested with a high frequency were conversation classes with American people and the teaching of words and expressions that are frequently used in daily life.

Note that the course topics that are directly related to U.S. culture--information about the differences between Turkish and U.S. cultures, videos and discussions related to U.S. culture--are among those that were the least frequently suggested. Compared with Table 13 (See page 98), it seems that the informants are unaware of what their needs are. In Table 13, while they ranked unfamiliarity with U.S. culture as the third most important and the knowledge of grammar rules as the fourth most important, in Figure 8 they suggested more weight on grammar than U.S. culture.

It is also interesting to note that these informants did not favour role-plays, which would create the environment that facilitates practicing conversational skills including the practice of vocabulary, idioms and expressions. This also contradicts with their ranking of the most important reasons for communication difficulties



in Table 13 (See page 98), in which they ranked a lack of conversational skills and unfamiliarity with idioms and expressions as the first two important reasons.

Finally, when compared to the findings from the informants with U.S. experience (See Figure 7, page 105), it can be observed that there is a significant difference in the frequency of suggestions for learning about U.S. culture. While the informants with U.S. experience suggested sessions of U.S. culture the most frequently, the informants at METU suggested the same course component the least frequently.

METU Informants' Comments on Question 13 and the Questionnaire. Question 14 in the close-ended questionnaire gave the opportunity for the informants to make comments on the questionnaire in general. Of the 142 informants, only 31 answered this question. Nine informants expressed their opinions about the on-going or suggested language courses. In general, these were not new suggestions but a repetition of some of the suggested course topics for emphasis. Two informants, for example, stated that the course they are attending currently would have been more useful if it had included, at least, some of the suggested course topics. One informant expressed her opinion about the course as follows:

"Language cannot be considered as separate from culture. Grammar rules can be learned easily, but not the American way of life, conversational language or idioms and expressions. In my opinion, we would feel more confident when we go to the U.S. if these were included in the course."

One informant, on the other hand, believes that as long as they study hard enough for the course at METU, they won't have any problems in the U.S. in using the language. Another informant made a comment on food: "I think getting used to the taste of food will be difficult".

Of the thirty-one informants, fifteen mentioned their problems and worries about their situation. Finally, seven informants thanked the researcher for carrying out such a study, one that deals with their "situation", and wished the researcher good luck in her study. Below are some of the answers of the informants in direct quotations, which are translated from Turkish to English:

- "I feel lonely and I already feel demoralized even before starting this adventure (going to the U.S.). There's no authority to guide us and help us for acceptance for American universities. We

would feel more confident and secure if there were an authority that would guide and support us."

- "We are indeed ignorant of what awaits us in the U.S. I feel as if I am left alone in the desert."
- "For whatever purpose you are doing this study, I would like to thank you for bringing our problems to the surface. I hope the results of your study will be taken into consideration by relevant authorities."
- "Please inform the Ministry of Education of the results of your study."
- "We should not be left on our own in the middle of nowhere, not knowing what to do."
- "I would like to see the results of this questionnaire put into practice."
- "The uncertainties of our situation should be made clear by the Ministry of Education and we should be provided with guidance in everything about our future life in the U.S."
- "Since METU prepares us for the TOEFL exam, I think all these (suggested course contents) should be dealt with separately, through very well-organized seminars held by the Ministry of Education."

It is obvious from the informants' answers that they have little--if any--knowledge of the U.S. in every aspect and that they need guidance and support in their preparation for further study in the U.S.

### Summary

In this chapter, an analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data has been presented. The results of the analysis indicate that, in general, the informants with U.S. experience have acknowledged the importance of awareness of U.S. culture in cross-cultural communication. These informants, in the light of their own experiences, suggest language courses that would increase students' awareness of U.S. culture, both in terms of daily and social life, and academic life for smooth cross-cultural adjustment.

The results of the quantitative data obtained from the informants at METU show that these informants are not fully aware of the role that target culture plays in cross-cultural communication. Overall, these informants have a low familiarity with U.S. culture and their assumptions about communication difficulties in the U.S. does not parallel the actual experiences of Turkish students in the U.S. In addition, their answers to related questions are conflicting. For example, although

they ranked unfamiliarity with U.S. culture as the third most important reason for communication difficulties, they did not favour course topic that would increase their awareness of U.S. culture over grammar rules.

The results also show that the informants at METU are more concerned about learning about U.S. academic life than the daily and social life there. However, considering the situation that they are in, this is understandable. The analysis of Question 14 reveals that these informants have problems and need support and guidance from authorities for obtaining information about life in the U.S., primarily universities and the formal procedures they have to follow related to these issues.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

### Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was two-fold: To investigate Turkish students' experiences in the U.S. in terms of cross-cultural adjustment; and to investigate the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of the graduate students at the DBE, METU, who will be going to the U.S. for further study. In this study, data were obtained from three groups of informants through interviews, semi-structured and close-ended questionnaires.

The interviews were held with the first group of informants; that is, those who had studied in the U.S. and who had returned to Turkey. The semi-structured questionnaire was given to the second group of informants who were studying in the United States at the time of the study. These students were e-mailed the questionnaire. Finally, the third group of informants, the graduate students at the DBE, METU, was given the close-ended questionnaire comprising parallel questions to those of the semi-structured questionnaire and of the interviews.

Both the semi-structured questionnaire and the interviews were designed in order to elicit information about the first two groups of informants' experiences in U.S. culture. The close-ended questionnaire was designed

to reveal the third group of informants' perceived needs pertaining to U.S. culture. In addition, all groups of the informants were asked to make suggestions for future language courses in Turkey that would be most beneficial to students in preparation for life in the U.S.

Coding technique was employed in the analysis of the qualitative data from the e-mailed questionnaire and interviews, and the results were displayed in terms of frequencies in figures. In the analysis of quantitative data, frequencies, percentages and means were calculated for each item separately and displayed in tables and figures.

### Summary of Findings and Conclusions

In this section, the general findings and conclusions of the study are presented with reference to the research questions of this study mentioned in Chapter 1.

#### U.S. Experiences

The first research question explored the experiences, in terms of U.S. culture, of Turkish students who are currently in the United States and of those who have been to the United States.

Overall, the findings indicate that the informants' perceptions of U.S. culture have a common pattern: Americans are individualistic, independent, direct, competitive, time-efficient, hardworking, distant in relationships, and obedient to rules. The informants' attribution of independence and individualism to American people supports the study of Bellah et al. (1985), which attributes the same characteristics to Americans. The American graduate education system is demanding, based on rules and requirements rather than personal associations, encourages critical thinking rather than memorization, and requires time management. Although these perceptions are relative, they indicate the fact that there ARE differences between U.S. and Turkish culture, and they DO require Turkish students in the U.S. to adjust to these differences.

#### Response to Differences

The research sub-question investigated how the informants responded to the differences that they perceived between U.S. and Turkish cultures. The informants' perceptions of the differences between U.S. and Turkish culture, and their low degree of familiarity ( $\Sigma M = 3.1$ ) with U.S. culture before going to the U.S.



explain their problems in adjustment to life in the U.S. and their communication difficulties.

One informant's experience of culture shock when she went to the U.S. is notable. This informant could not go out of her room for a week and explained her difficulty in adjusting to life in the U.S. as follows:

"You don't have a routine there (in the U.S.); it's not part of your life, and you have to acquire that routine. I found it extremely difficult to do that" (See page 73).

The above quote supports Furnham's (1994) point of view related to the reasons for culture shock and individual experiences in a new culture. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Furnham states that people experience culture shock because they "lack points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behavior" (1994, p. 96). Furnham further states that the degree of culture shock can be reduced by knowledge of the target culture.

As for communication difficulties the informants experienced, the results indicate that the most commonly experienced communication difficulties pertain to daily life and social situations - understanding fast speech, ordering food and drink, speaking on the telephone and starting a conversation with Americans in a social

gathering. These situations are, in fact, among the ones that cause most difficulty for people who are new to the target culture (Furnham & Bochner, 1982, cited in Furnham, 1994). Other commonly experienced difficulties are talking to lecturers, professors and advisers; and understanding various accents, slang, idioms and expressions. The informants attributed their communication difficulties to lack of conversational skills, unfamiliarity with commonly used idioms and expressions, and lack of awareness of U.S. socio-cultural values. One informant's explanation for his communication difficulties is notable: "Since the way of life is different, the way they think is different; thus, the way they understand us and we understand them is different until we totally learn their ways." (E-mail questionnaire, April 15, 1998).

The role of cultural differences is also evident in the changes that the informants had to make in their lifestyle or behavior in order to adjust to life in the U.S. The informants had to learn to be self-sufficient and take responsibility for their own lives, to be self-disciplined in terms of time management in order to meet the requirements of the courses, to get used to being alone most of the time, and to study individually rather than with friends. They also learned to be direct in

expressing themselves, and tolerant and respectful of other people's diverse values and beliefs. In other words, they were forced into what they perceived as an "American pattern."

Three of the informants' perceptions of American people as selfish for being individualistic and independent, and as rude for being direct, reflect their negative attitudes towards American people. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these people "wrongly attribute aspects of people's behavior to their own personalities instead of realizing they are simply conforming to different cultural norms" (Bentahila & Davies, 1989, p.103).

In addition to these three informants, two other informants had adjustment problems. One informant, for example, stated that he was trying to accept things as they are and not think about them. This informant, for future language courses in Turkey, which will be discussed later, suggested that Turkish students contact the Turkish Students Association at their university when they go to the U.S., so that they would "feel at home" (E-mailed questionnaire, April 14, 1998). The other informant stated that she kept her social contact with Americans to a minimum since "it is too difficult to accomplish two things (achievement in social and academic

life) at the same time" (E-mailed Questionnaire, April 17, 1998).

The analysis also shows that these five informants, who had a negative attitude toward American people and who experienced adjustment problems, were socially distant from American people and had frequent intragroup contact. In other words, these five informants almost never socialized with Americans whereas they socialized with other Turks very frequently.

Considered in light of Schumann's acculturation model (1978a), the findings from the five informants mentioned above suggest that these informants' social distance from American people can be related to their adjustment problems and their negative attitude towards U.S. culture.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, learners' negative attitudes and adjustment problems can be attributed to their lack of awareness of or low familiarity with U.S. culture (Furnham, 1994; Nababan, 1974). Thus, awareness of target culture is crucial since knowledge of target culture will enhance students' understanding and appreciation of both their culture and target culture (Robinson & Nocon, 1996) and facilitate cross-cultural adjustment.

The suggestions of the two groups of informants with U.S. experience regarding future language courses show that they acknowledge the crucial role of U.S. culture in their use of the language and their adjustment to life in the U.S. As indicated in Chapter 4, the informants suggested role-plays and conversation classes to enhance conversational skills and knowledge of U.S. culture as well as advice on how to adjust to life in the U.S.

These findings support the fact that language and culture are inseparable and that target culture should be taught in foreign language classrooms (Brown, 1990; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Hinkel, 1995; Kramsch, 1993; Valdes, 1988).

#### Anticipated U.S. Experience

The second research question investigated the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of the informants at METU, who will be going to the U.S. for further study. This research question had three sub-questions, which explored the informants' needs in terms of personal adjustment to daily routines, building and maintaining social relationships with people, and adjusting to the U.S. graduate education system.

The findings reveal that, overall, the METU informants have a very low familiarity with U.S. culture

in terms of daily and social life ( $\Sigma M = 2.1$ ), and academic life ( $\Sigma M = 2.3$ ). This is also evident in Table 11 (Page 92), which displays the analysis of these informants' assumptions about the situations in which they might have the most difficulty while communicating with American people.

There are striking differences between these informants' assumptions and the actual experiences of the informants in the U.S. The informants at METU assume that adjustment to daily routines such as ordering food and drink and speaking on the telephone will not cause any difficulties at all while, in fact, these were among the situations in which the informants in the U.S. experienced the most difficulty. This has serious implications as to the degree of culture shock the METU informants might experience and the length of time needed for their adjustment to life in the U.S.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, so many aspects of social behavior are culture-specific (Furnham, 1994). Therefore, it is likely that the METU informants, without an awareness of differences in social behavior, will fail to initiate or perform appropriate social behavior and thus fail to communicate effectively. Smith (1981) contends that if people who are new in a culture are "well-equipped," i.e. have an awareness of the target culture,

they will be able to cope with cultural differences they encounter. If, however, they are not well-equipped, "at least they should be informed that they will have to stumble over the threshold they are trying to cross" (p. 221). Therefore, teaching METU students U.S. cultural patterns is essential in that it will help them develop a positive attitude toward U.S. culture and it will "minimize culture shock" (Furnham, 1994; Furnham & Bochner, 1986, cited in Byram et al. 1994; Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996; Smith, 1981).

Considering the suggestions for future language courses, the informants at METU seem to be more concerned with academic issues than U.S. social and daily life. The course topic suggested most frequently by these informants was information on the U.S. graduate education system. It is interesting to note, however, that while these same informants ranked unfamiliarity with U.S. socio-cultural values as the third most important reason for their assumed communication difficulties, cultural awareness was among the least favoured course topics.

The METU informants' conflicting answers to the closely related questions can be explained by their not being certain of what their actual needs are. This, again, stems from lack of familiarity with U.S. culture since the students do not know what they are going to

encounter when they go to the United States. Their cultural curiosity focuses mainly on the U.S. graduate study education system. It is not surprising that these informants concentrate more on academic issues since this is the foremost subject in their minds, i.e., their main purpose for going to the U.S. is to study.

#### Comparison of Findings

The final research question sought to elicit whether the perceived needs of the METU informants, in terms of U.S. culture, parallel those of the students who actually experienced living in the United States. The discussion of findings presented throughout reveals that the METU informants' perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, do not parallel those of the informants with U.S. experience.

Overall, the analysis of the data shows that the first two groups of informants, having been through the experience of living in the United States, are well aware of the crucial role target culture plays in learning a foreign language and living in a foreign country. In addition, the responses indicate agreement that awareness of cultural differences would promote less stressful cross-cultural adjustment. Therefore, these students deem awareness of U.S. culture a priority.



The results also indicate that the informants at METU are not very clear about their cultural needs. Although they address their perceived needs for U.S. culture, these needs do not go beyond the U.S. graduate education system and formal procedures they have to fulfill concerning academic issues. These informants, not being fully aware of their cultural needs, are likely to encounter "more numerous intercultural stumbling blocks" (Smith, 1981, p.221) and go through a more stressful adjustment period in the United States.

In conclusion, gaining awareness of U.S. culture is essential for these students in that it will help them understand, appreciate, and respect the target culture as well as their own and thus facilitate cross-cultural communication.

#### Pedagogical Implications

This study has important implications concerning future pre-departure language courses for people who will be studying in the United States.

This study may be beneficial for several purposes. First, it may provide guidance for foreign language teaching institutions in designing language courses that would cater to the specific needs of the students in this study. Second, it may contribute to the enhancement of

the ongoing language courses the DBE, METU. Some of the course components suggested by the students (See Figure 7, page 105) might be integrated into the course as much as time and facilities permit. Third, the Ministry of Education, the sponsor of the students at METU, might gain insight into these students' pre- and post-departure problems and act toward solving these problems. Finally, this study could serve as a source for other researchers to elaborate on.

#### Limitations

One limitation regarding the data collection techniques was the use of a close-ended questionnaire with the third group of informants; that is, those at METU. Had there not been time constraints, these students could also have been given a semi-structured questionnaire, through which richer data would have been obtained. In Question 13, for example, (Appendix C) the informants were provided with options to select from. Although the informants were asked to select the 7 most important from a total of 13 course topics, which they did, it would have been much better to design an open-ended question and to compare the METU informants' own suggestions with those of the students who experienced living in the United States.

One other limitation was the limited number of participants for the interviews. In this study, only six informants were interviewed. Since interviewing is an effective technique "to access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (Patton, 1990), gaining insight into the U.S. experiences of more people would have enriched this study.

Another limitation stemmed from not being able to talk in person with the informants who were currently in the U.S. Consequently, the relationship between these informants' attitudes toward U.S. culture, the degree to which they are socially distant from Americans, and their adjustment problems could not be analyzed in depth. It would have been interesting to reveal to what extent Schumann's acculturation model (1978a) is true of the informants in the U.S.

#### Further Research

This study dealt with the perceived needs, in terms of U.S. culture, of the graduate students who are taking a language course at the DBE, METU. It also investigated Turkish students' experiences in the U.S. in cross-cultural adjustment to allow for comparison between the two groups.

Further research can be done to gain a thorough understanding of the METU students' opinions and expectations about living in the U.S. and their attitudes toward American people and U.S. culture. The data obtained from METU informants can be verified or compared through interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Classroom observations can also be employed in order to verify the data as regards the students' opinions of the on-going language courses. It would also be interesting to examine the course books in order to determine to what extent target culture is dealt with in the English language classrooms.

Finally, further research can be done in order to determine the pre-departure English language course syllabi that would cater to the needs of students, in terms of U.S. culture, who will be studying in the U.S.

All of these would serve to expand on the important issue of cultural preparation and cultural adjustment of Turkish students as they pursue education abroad.

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## Appendix A

## Interview Questions

"The purpose of this interview is to get information that will form the basis of my research project. I will interview people like you, who have studied in the U.S. and the interview is about your experiences of living in the U.S. and your thoughts about your experiences. Whatever you tell me during the interview will be of great help for me in my research. Your name will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions before we begin?"

1. Let me first ask you about your personal background:

Age

Present job

Education

Year of going to the U.S.

Year of returning to Turkey

Which U.S. state

Subject of the study

Accommodation

2. To what extent were you familiar with U.S. culture before you went to the United States?

3. Did you take an English language course before you went to the U.S.?

4. What (else) did you do to prepare yourself for life in the U.S.?

5. Now I'd like you to think of the year when you went to the U.S.:

- a. What was it like to live in another country?
  - b. How did you feel about it?
6. a. What were the most distinctive changes in your lifestyle that you had to make in order to adjust to life in the U.S.?
- b. How did you feel about these changes in your life?
7. a. In which situations did you experience a communication breakdown while communicating with American people?
- b. What was the reason for the failure?
8. a. Based on your experience of living in the U.S., what do you think are the most striking differences in terms of daily and social life, and academic life between U.S. and Turkish cultures?
9. Suppose you were asked to design a course in Turkey for the students who are going to study in the U.S.. Your aim is to prepare Turkish students for 'American way of life':
- a. What would the course topics be?
  - b. How would these help the students?

## Appendix B

## Semi-structured (E-mail) Questionnaire

Dear Students,

I am an MA-TEFL graduate student at Bilkent University. I am doing a research project on the role of culture in foreign language learning. I am interested in your experiences of living in the U.S. and your opinions about living in a foreign country. Your responses will be of great help for me in my research. Your name and responses will be kept confidential. There are 24 questions in total, and I will be very grateful if you would take a few moments to complete the questions below.

Thank you,  
Esra Ozogul

A. Please answer or put an "x" against all the items

below that apply to you:

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_ years old
2. What is your sex? \_\_\_\_\_ male \_\_\_\_\_ female
3. What part of Turkey are you from? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which university did you graduate from?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your marital status?  
\_\_\_\_\_ single \_\_\_\_\_ engaged \_\_\_\_\_ married  
\_\_\_\_\_ divorced \_\_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. If you are engaged or married, is your partner with  
you in  
the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

7. In which U.S. State do you live?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Which university are you studying at?

University \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

9. How long have you been living in the U.S.?

\_\_\_\_\_year(s) \_\_\_\_\_months

10. Where are you staying?

\_\_\_\_\_ in the university dormitory

\_\_\_\_\_ as a lodger with an American family

\_\_\_\_\_ in an apartment or a house by yourself

\_\_\_\_\_ in an apartment or a house that I share with  
other people

\_\_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

11. If you are sharing an apartment or a house:

a. How many people are you sharing it with?

\_\_\_\_\_ with one person

\_\_\_\_\_ with more than one person

b. What are their nationalities?

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Are they students as well?

\_\_\_\_\_yes      \_\_\_\_\_some of them      \_\_\_\_\_no

If they are students, are they at the same  
university?      \_\_\_\_\_yes      \_\_\_\_\_no

B. Put "x" against only one item below:

12. I meet up with other Turkish people socially (outside  
an academic context, eg. going to a café, bar, cinema,  
parties, watching or playing sports games, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ almost everyday  
\_\_\_\_\_ about three times a week  
\_\_\_\_\_ about once a week  
\_\_\_\_\_ about once a month  
\_\_\_\_\_ almost never

13. I meet up with American people socially (outside an  
academic context, eg. going to a café, bar, cinema,  
parties, watching or playing sports games, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_ almost everyday  
\_\_\_\_\_ about three times a week  
\_\_\_\_\_ about once a week  
\_\_\_\_\_ about once a month  
\_\_\_\_\_ almost never

14.a. Do you engage in similar activities both with  
Turkish and American people?

\_\_\_\_\_ yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes                      \_\_\_\_\_ no

b. If your answer is "no", how do they differ from each other? Please explain briefly.

15. How much did you know about the 'American way of life' before you went to the U.S.?

\_\_\_\_\_ none at all

\_\_\_\_\_ very little

\_\_\_\_\_ some

\_\_\_\_\_ a lot

\_\_\_\_\_ very much

16. How much did you know about the American graduate education system before you went to the U.S.?

\_\_\_\_\_ none at all

\_\_\_\_\_ very little

\_\_\_\_\_ some

\_\_\_\_\_ a lot

\_\_\_\_\_ very much

17. Before going to the U.S., did you attend an English language course in Turkey as preparation for your studying in the U.S.?      \_\_\_\_\_yes      \_\_\_\_\_no

18. If yes, read the statement below and put an "x" under the initials that most clearly corresponds to your opinion for each item about the English language course that you have taken in Turkey:

Strongly Agree = **SA**

Agree = **A**

Uncertain = **U**

Disagree = **D**

Strongly Disagree = **SD**

"I benefited greatly from the course in terms of:"

	<u><b>SA</b></u>	<u><b>A</b></u>	<u><b>U</b></u>	<u><b>D</b></u>	<u><b>SD</b></u>
a. vocabulary	—	—	—	—	—
b. grammar rules	—	—	—	—	—
c. academic writing skills	—	—	—	—	—
d. reading skills	—	—	—	—	—
e. listening skills	—	—	—	—	—
f. conversational skills	—	—	—	—	—
g. gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between Turkish and American ways of life	—	—	—	—	—

19. Based on your experience of living in the U.S., what do you think are the most striking differences between the American and Turkish societies?



a. In terms of social life:

b. In terms of educational/academic life:

20. What are the most distinctive changes in your lifestyle that you have had to make in order to adjust to the life in the U.S.?

21. Have you ever had difficulty in communicating with American people? \_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

a. If yes, put an "x" against the area that you had the most difficulty and describe the situation:

\_\_\_\_\_ in speaking

\_\_\_\_\_ in understanding

The situation was:

b. What do you think caused the difficulty?

22.a. In which situations did you have difficulties while communicating with American people when you first started living in the U.S.?

b. In which situations do you think you are still having trouble with?

Put an "x" against the items below which apply to you: Use "IN THE PAST" column for the difficulties that you had when you first went to the U.S. and "AT PRESENT" column for the difficulties that you are still having.

IN THE PAST

AT PRESENT

In a social context:

_____	talking on the telephone	_____
_____	understanding fast speakers	_____
_____	ordering food or drink	_____
_____	going shopping	_____
_____	using public transportation	_____
_____	opening a bank account	_____
_____	using a credit card	_____

_____	making an appointment (hairstylist, doctor, school personnel, academic counsellor, foreign student office, etc.)	_____
_____	expressing invitations	_____
_____	accepting/refusing an invitation, offer, or suggestion)	_____
_____	asking somebody to go out on a date	_____
_____	starting a conversation with American people in a social gathering	_____
_____	making friends among American people	_____
	In an academic context:	
_____	talking to lecturers, professors, advisers	_____
_____	asking questions during lectures	_____
_____	expressing your opinions in discussions during lectures	_____
_____	other (please specify) _____	

23. What do you think are the most important reasons for the difficulties mentioned above? Please grade the reasons below by numbering them from 1 to 5, to indicate the level of importance. (1= the most important; 5= the least important) Please do not use the same number twice.

- \_\_\_\_\_ insufficient knowledge of grammar rules
- \_\_\_\_\_ limited vocabulary and unfamiliar idioms and expressions
- \_\_\_\_\_ inability to use appropriate language in conversation (starting/ending a conversation, asking for information, making phone calls, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ inability to interpret body language (facial expression, gestures, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ unfamiliarity with American socio-cultural values.

24. Suppose you were asked to design a course in Turkey for students like yourself, who are going to study in the U.S. What would you include in the program that you think would be most useful for these students in order to be able to cope with difficulties that YOU have experienced in the U.S.?

End of the Questionnaire

## Appendix C

## Close-ended Questionnaire

Dear Students,

I am an MA TEFL graduate student at Bilkent University. My topic research is concerned with you, who are going to study in the United States. I am interested in your opinions about graduate education and life in the U.S. as well as your expectations from a language course that would prepare you for life in the U.S. Your answers to the questions will be of great help for me in my research. Thank you for your time and attention.

Esra Özoğul

A. Please answer the questions or tick the answers that are true of you:

1. Age:

a. 20-22    b. 23-25    c. 26-28    d. 29 and above

2. Sex:

a. male    b. female

3. City of residence in Turkey:

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Marital status:

a. single    b. engaged    c. married    d. divorced

e. other(please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. University graduate from: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Type of preferred accommodation in the U.S.:

- ☐ In the university dormitory
- ☐ As a lodger with an American family
- ☐ In an apartment or a house by yourself
- ☐ In an apartment or a house shared with other Turks
- ☐ In an apartment or a house shared with Americans
- ☐ In an apartment or a house shared with other international students

## 7. How much do you feel you know about U.S. culture?

Please circle each number that is true of you.

1= Almost 0%, 2= very little, 3= some, 4= a lot,

5= almost 100%

---

	almost 0%	very little	some	a lot	almost 100%
<hr/>					
<u>Daily Life</u>					
Shopping	1	2	3	4	5
Public transport	1	2	3	4	5
Traffic regulations	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation types	1	2	3	4	5
Public instituitons & services	1	2	3	4	5

Social Life

Family life	1	2	3	4	5
Personal relationships	1	2	3	4	5
Customs	1	2	3	4	5
Working life	1	2	3	4	5
National holidays	1	2	3	4	5
Religion	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment	1	2	3	4	5
Sport Facilities	1	2	3	4	5

Academic Life

Universities	1	2	3	4	5
Academic requirements	1	2	3	4	5
System of assessment	1	2	3	4	5
Educational resources	1	2	3	4	5

8. How much do you feel you know about the legal obligations that you must fulfill when you go to the U.S.?

	almost 0%	very little	some	a lot	almost 100%
	1	2	3	4	5

9. Please circle the number that most clearly corresponds to your opinion for each item below about the language course that you are attending at METU at the moment:

(Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Uncertain=3,

Disagree=4, Strongly Disagree=5)

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"I benefit greatly from the course in terms of:"

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	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
b. grammar rules	1	2	3	4	5
c. academic writing skills	1	2	3	4	5
d. reading skills	1	2	3	4	5
e. listening skills	1	2	3	4	5
f. conversational skills	1	2	3	4	5
g. gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between Turkish and American ways of life	1	2	3	4	5
h. gaining awareness of the differences and similarities between Turkish and American education systems	1	2	3	4	5



10. Apart from the language course at METU, are you doing anything in order to prepare for life in the U.S.?

Please tick the items below that are true of you.

- ☐ I am not doing anything at all.
- ☐ I read about the U.S.
- ☐ I follow the American media.
- ☐ I read university prospectuses
- ☐ I learn about the U.S. from people who previously studied in the U.S.
- ☐ I am attending another English language course.

11. Please circle the situations below in which you think you might have language (communication) problems when you go to the U.S.

1= Might cause the most difficulty

2= Might cause some difficulty

3= Will cause no difficulty at all

	the most difficulty	some difficulty	no difficulty
<u>In a social context:</u>			
Talking on the telephone	1	2	3
Understanding fast speakers	1	2	3
Understanding various accents and slang	1	2	3
Ordering food or drink	1	2	3

	the most difficulty	some difficulty	no difficulty
Going shopping	1	2	3
Using public transportation	1	2	3
Opening a bank account	1	2	3
Obtainig/using a credit card	1	2	3
Making an appointment (hairedresser, doctor, school personnel, counsellor, foreign student office, etc.)	1	2	3
Expressing invitations	1	2	3
Accepting/refusing an offer, invitation, or suggestion	1	2	3
Asking somebody to go out on a date	1	2	3
Starting a conversation with American people in a social gathering	1	2	3
Making friends among American people	1	2	3
<u>In an academic context:</u>			
Taking notes during lectures	1	2	3
Talking to lecturers, professors, advisers	1	2	3
Asking questions during lectures	1	2	3
Expressing your opinions in discussions during lectures	1	2	3
Using computer	1	2	3

12. In your opinion, which of the items below do you think would be the most important reason for your communication difficulties in the U.S.? Please rank the items below by numbering them from 1 to 5 (1= the most important, 5= the least important). Please do not use the same number twice.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Insufficient knowledge of grammar rules
- \_\_\_\_\_ Limited vocabulary and unfamiliar idioms and expressions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inability to use appropriate language in conversation (starting/ending a conversation, asking for information, making phone calls, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inability to interpret body language
- \_\_\_\_\_ Unfamiliarity with American socio-cultural values

13. What particular topics do you think are the most beneficial and that should be covered in a course that prepares students for life in the U.S.? Of the topics below, please tick the 7 most important.

- ☐ Words and expressions that are frequently used in daily life.
- ☐ Role plays of situations in daily life in order to

enhance conversational skills.

- ☐ Videos and discussions related to U.S. culture.
- ☐ Listening exercises that give examples of a variety of English usage (accents, slang, etc.).
- ☐ Conversation classes with American people.
- ☐ Opportunities to learn about the experiences of Turkish people studying in the U.S.
- ☐ Information about differences in Turkish and U.S. cultures.
- ☐ Advice on culture shock and psychological problems frequently encountered by foreign students in the U.S.
- ☐ Seminars given preferably by American teachers concerning graduate education, universities, student responsibilities, computer labs, libraries and other resources in the U.S.
- ☐ Academic writing skills.
- ☐ Practicing presentation skills, research skills, and group work.
- ☐ More grammar rules.
- ☐ Practical information about daily life procedures and legal obligations.

14.If you would like anything else to add, please write  
it in the space provided below.

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## Appendix D

Transcription of the Interview with Elvan<sup>1</sup>

JOB: Instructor at an English-medium university

DURATION OF STAY: 1993-1995

FORMER EXPERIENCE OF LIVING ABROAD: Holidays in European cities.

U.S. STATE (RESIDED IN): Pennsylvania

UNIVERSITY: Pennsylvania State College

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION: I stayed on my own. I rented a flat. Before I went there, they sent me the brochures and everything. They also sent me a form asking whether I would prefer to stay in the dormitories. I said 'yes' - I filled in the form and sent some money because I wasn't sure about the living conditions there, so I said to be on the safe side I should reserve a place. If I don't like it, I can change it later on. But I went there and the dorms were not open yet and, because the teaching assistantships had to be there earlier, I went in the middle of August. I went to see the dorms and I didn't like them at all because they were mostly for undergraduate students, 4 people staying in one room and they didn't have bathrooms in the rooms - they had common public bathrooms outside, and showers. They were very

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<sup>1</sup> The interview was held in English on March 6, 1998. Elvan is a pseudonym.

small rooms so I said there is no way I can study here.

With 4 people it's very difficult.

As soon as I arrived there, I changed my mind, I said I don't want to stay here at the dorm - I should go and look for an apartment so that's what I did. I didn't want to share. I wanted to be alone. First of all it was my first living on my own experience. Also because if I'd had a roommate, it wouldn't have been so comfortable. I had to study a lot, so I needed total silence. I don't mind being alone so it was OK for me.

Q: Did you have an idea about the kind of lifestyle you were going to have in the U.S.?

A: More or less I did because we are so familiar with U.S. culture. I didn't feel strange or alienated in any way when I first arrived there. It's funny because we were 4 teaching assistants there. All of them were native speakers. One of them was from Canada, the others were American. I was the only non-native speaker. The first day, we had a meeting. One of the TAs, an American lady, who became my best friend, later on said that when I walked through the door, "Look at this Californian." They didn't understand that I was from another country, but when I opened my mouth, she thought "She has some strange accent, it's not like California at all." I adapted to

the lifestyle very easily, it wasn't a problem for me at all.

Q: Were there 4 of you on the same course?

A: We were taking the same course but we were 4 assistants at the same time. We were teaching at the same time.

Q: Did you teach American students?

A: No, but I taught a lot of courses. The students were American citizens, they were from Korea, China, Puerto Rico, South America - Argentina, Venezuela. It was a lot of fun. At first I was shocked, I said how am I going to teach these people. What are they going to say? A Turk teaching us? But they didn't mind. They were very nice. Actually I was teaching a course to graduate doctoral students and it was an oral skills course, because usually their presentation and oral skills are weak. They need these skills to stay at the university, to go on with their studies and to be assistants themselves. Those people were very polite. I had older students. They were older than me. They were married, they had kids, mostly from China and Korea so they were very polite people. It was a very nice experience.



Q: When you compare your students in America with those in Turkey, what can you say?

A: Very different. I didn't teach general English at all, like we do here. I taught 2 freshman writing courses and one oral course. The freshman students were of course younger. They were in their first year and some of them tended not to take the course seriously. But they were all very well behaved. The older PhD students were very motivated. The freshmen weren't so motivated. Their needs are very different because of their language backgrounds, especially the oriental students. They have tremendous difficulties pronouncing certain words so we had to do a lot of pronunciation practice. Every week they had assignments. For example, we studied certain sounds that week and I gave them assignments. They had to read those to the tape or they had to tell a story using those sounds. Every week I had 13 or 14 tapes. I took them home and listened to each one. I talked to them on the tape. I said "Look, Hanju(?), you're not pronouncing your 'r's. This is the way you should pronounce it. I modelled it on the tape. I gave them feedback orally. It took a whole day just doing those tapes.

Q: You say you didn't have any difficulty in adjusting to life there.

A: Well, not at first. At first everything was wonderful. I was so happy. I was living on my own for the first time. I could do whatever I wanted, nobody knew me there. I was totally free. Then the program started. I was under a lot of stress and that frustrated me a lot. We were all in the same position. It didn't matter that I was a foreigner. The Americans also complained a lot because the work load was very heavy, especially because of the assistantship duties as well. I got frustrated because I couldn't do anything. All I did was sit at home and study. So I said what's the difference. I might as well be in China or Turkmenistan or somewhere else. I can't see any of the U.S., I can only see my 4 walls. That really frustrated me because we had a lovely lake at the state college, where people went to sail and for walks, in the winter they went there to ski. I couldn't do any of them because I had to stay home and study. Later on I got frustrated more because in U.S. culture, they say it's different on the west coast - the west coast people are more relaxed, friendly and easy-going - whereas on the east coast they are very uptight. My professors were very disciplined and organised and uptight. We always had to call them doctor. People on the West Coast say they always call their teachers by their first names. They always kept this distance. I was frustrated because

nobody was ever interested in me personally. They never asked my advice. They never asked me "How are you getting along? Have you found a flat yet? Do you have any problems?" because I was a foreigner. They just expected the work to be done very well and if it wasn't done they had criticisms and so on. I was a little bit disappointed about that. But generally when you look at them they're very friendly. They smile a lot. When you see them on the street they always say "How are you? How are things going?" etc. but they don't really care deep inside. They never communicate with you as a person. I shouldn't generalise, my friends were not like that, but my professors were very distant and cold. I had very nice friends there, especially this woman from Canada. She was different and it really showed. She was very warm and she had been to Turkey before and she had loved Turkey. She loved to come and talk to me about Turkey, learn about my culture etc. I had American friends. They were nice. They were friendly. In Turkey you phone someone just to say "Hi, how are you doing?" but there when I wanted to do that, one of my friends, after I'd phoned her, just for nothing because I was so bored, she said "What can I do for you?". There's always a purpose for calling people. You never call people just to chat. That's the impression I get. Of course, maybe in that environment it was the

case. Maybe if people were living a normal life - that wasn't a normal life, we we're all under pressure and stress and trying to meet the deadlines. That feeling of ecstasy gradually wore down. I was back in real life. I said this is it. The standards were very high at school. We we're expected to do a lot of things. I had to write a lot of papers. They didn't accept a paper that wasn't so good. It had to be really perfect.

Q: How is the education system different to the one here in Turkey?

A: I did graduate work there. I don't know how the graduate programs are here so I can't really compare. But generally they are very strict. You can't turn your paper in the next day. You have to turn it in that day, on the day that it's required. You can't have the luxury of not attending classes. They were very strict with absence, which in a way is good because things worked. Things work very well there. Nothing goes wrong. Everything is organised and very professional. On our first day, for example, one of our professors gave us the syllabus for the whole semester and everything was written very clearly on the syllabus. She said "OK, this is the first week. These are the readings I want you to do. This is when your first midterm is. This is when this assignment

is due. There is no way that you can tell her "I didn't know." She never went over them again. This was our responsibility to check it once in a while.

Q: What was the most distinctive change in your lifestyle that you had to make in order to adjust to life there?

A: The most important thing was time management. Here I never thought of that. Here, things somehow seem to find their way. But there you have to make an effort. I found myself constantly organising my time. I would say for 2 hours I'm going to do my readings. Then I'm going to start writing this paper. When it's finished I'm going to go back to my tapes. I needed to do this arrangement of time so that I could catch up. I felt very unhappy, very much under stress. I felt that my life was slipping through my fingers. I turned into this frantic rabbit running everywhere. I didn't like it at all because I'm not that kind of person. I can't work well such under pressure. I need to laugh sometimes and gather my thoughts and do things at my own pace. I didn't like being pushed around so much.

Q: What about your relationships with people?

A: My boyfriend was an American, so I was in American circles. Usually, the Koreans stick together, the Turks

stick together. They have their groups. They don't want to get out of the group and mix with Americans but I had to, first of all because of my department; second, because I was a teaching assistant. That also helped because all the assistants were American and they invited me over for dinner and things like that. I think it was a bit superficial. On the surface everybody likes you. At first I liked this "You're from Turkey. What is it like? Where is it? What do people do there?" I was very enthusiastic. I used to talk about my country and you really feel patriotic. But gradually it gets on your nerves, people just coming to you as if you're some kind of extinct animal. People were interested. They were all shocked that I could adapt to this environment so well. They said "You don't look foreign at all and you speak English so well. We can't believe that you are a foreigner." That's what I always heard from every American I met. They were amazed. They had some strange (ideas). We had these pot luck dinners. Everybody cooked something and brought it. At the end when the dinner was finished they packed up whatever was left and took it home. I was shocked because in Turkey we have this tendency of cooking lots and lots of things and we just leave it with the host. I thought this is so rude, packing things and taking them home.

I also know these people, when they enter a house they just take their coats off and throw them on the floor. I don't know if this was specific to those people. They didn't have coat hangers like we do in Turkey. They just have closets and they just hang them there.

Q: Are there any situations in which you experienced a communication breakdown with American people?

A: Somehow I managed to communicate, even if there were things I couldn't express very well or if they were using slang and I couldn't understand. I always asked them. I never felt embarrassed or felt bad because I didn't understand something.

Q: What do you think are the most striking differences between Turkish and American society?

A: The Turks tend to be very close. This is a group-oriented nation. They like doing things in groups, going places in groups and they tend to think of not individuals' but the group's benefit. I don't know if it's good or bad but in the U.S. everyone's on their own. If you're successful, you're successful because of yourself, because of what you've achieved, your hard work etc. If you fail, you're a failure because you weren't successful, you didn't try hard enough. They can be very

cruel. That's why, I think, in the U.S. there are so many depressed people and there are so many eating disorders, a lot of fat people, so many psychological problems and everything because they are not open to one another, they feel that it's something shameful to talk about feelings, how they feel, to ask for help. For example, in the exams nobody shows their grade to their classmates. Everybody's secret. Here they say "What did you get? I got this." It's not something secret. Everybody wants to know. It's OK. Nobody minds it. But there it's a matter of honour, almost. To me that was something strange. They don't like to share notes. If you a friend, they will be very reluctant to give you their notes. They don't like helping each other. There's this competition. They all want to be number 1. It's not cooperation but competition.

Q: What did you mean by "American people can be cruel?"

A:...they had a lot of pronunciation problems. It was difficult to understand. She wasn't tolerant. She was very impatient with those students. We had Chinese students as well. Their language was not so good, either, especially one Taiwanese girl. She used to tell me that people didn't want to talk to her. People didn't want to be friends with her or socialize with her because they



couldn't wait for her to finish her sentence. If she didn't understand something, they wouldn't repeat it. They're not helpful in that way at all. For example, we had this place that sells sandwiches called 'Subway'. They have these 'subs' and you can have anything - a meatball sub, salami etc. and the people who work at the counter have the counter in front of them and they have all these condiments - olives, onion, lettuce, etc. to put in the sub. That's where I experienced a communication breakdown because I never understood what they were saying. They were asking "White or wheat?" and I didn't understand what this meant. They just listed all these things so quickly. "Would you like onion, pepper...in your sub?" When you asked them to repeat, they would repeat it with the same speed, the same tone of voice. It didn't register that I might be a foreigner and I might ask for a slower repetition or I might ask for some clarification. They just repeated with the same speed but later on I got used to that. I just ordered something that I saw. I didn't go into this detailed explanation of the sandwich. I just said "I want one of that."

Q: How many times did you ask the person to repeat it?

A: I guess just once, and then I gave up.

Q: What is the reaction of those people once they understand that you're a foreigner?

A: They don't change. They don't adjust their language much. They always speak in the same speed, the same accent. It's funny because they must be used to foreigners. There are so many foreign students there. I guess they just don't bother. They don't take the pain to change anything.

Q: Was there any big difference in intimate relationships, which maybe puzzled you or was just different?

A: I only knew one person and he is very different so I can't generalize and say "American men are like that." Generally, they are very respectful to women. They see women as equals. They are very much on friendly terms. There is no imbalance, as there is in Turkey. It's not like a macho image. Men there, because they leave home early and they go to other states to study at college, mature earlier. They learn how to take care of themselves and they are not dependent on women. That's a reason why they see women as equals.

Q: Did you have any sort of conflict with your lecturers?

A: No, I didn't. It's partly because of my position, because I was a teaching assistant. They gave me the job,

so they couldn't come up and say "Your English is not good enough" or "You're not doing this properly." I was observed by them. The supervisor, the head of the assistants, who was also my adviser, came and observed me. He gave me feedback. I didn't have any conflict. But I felt bad, because I was also a foreign student and why should the others be treated differently? I don't think it's the same situation in other universities. That must have been a special case because I had a lot of American friends there. Even in the same department, other programs were not like that. The lecturers and the professors used to give parties at their homes. They used to have garden parties. But ours were very formal. It was the culture of that department.

Q: Did you have any Turkish friends there?

A: I did. Not very many but I had some nice Turkish friends. I didn't hang around with them so much. All of them were postgraduates. They sometimes had parties, Turkish nights, so sometimes I went there. But I was so busy that I couldn't socialize with either Americans or Turks.

Q: Suppose that you were going to design a course for postgraduate students going to the U.S. for further study, what kind of English course could you design?

A: If we take for granted that their English is good, adequate to study there, I'm not thinking about the language aspect just the culture aspect, things like body language. The ways Americans use their bodies are very different from the ways we use our bodies. Reading the body language could be taught. Register - how they speak to friends and how they speak to professors. Other things like speech acts, how to refuse people politely. If you have a lot of work to do and you can't go somewhere, how to invite people to your home, what to do in certain situations, maybe something around role-plays would be very nice. For example, shopping. How to write academic papers. A lot of students don't know how to do it. There was a writing course given to international students there. My best friend, who was an assistant, used to teach that course. There were a lot of Turkish students on her course. They didn't know how to write an academic paper because it's not taught here in our universities. That's a very important skill, which they need to learn. Giving presentations, how to speak in front of an audience because they need to do that. That's what we used to teach on the oral courses that we gave, because

they lack that skill. I think 50% of it is personal. You need to be very open-minded. You need to be a relaxed person, not an uptight, stressed-out person. Then you may just flip out.

I am an easy-going person but I remember in the second month I honestly thought of packing my bags and coming back here. I thought I don't think I can do this. I can't take this, the work and the pressure. I said what am I doing here. I have a nice job and family and friends back there. Maybe some survival skills. The first few months are very hard. If you get through those months, it's easier. But I don't think you can teach those things. You have to live through them and learn and see how people react and your reactions because everybody reacts differently. Of course, knowing the culture, the language helps a lot. That's why I was so familiar but still I had great difficulty.

Q: Since you have this experience yourself, living in a foreign country, how do you approach your (TOEFL) students here?

A: I try to tell them a lot of things I experienced. To them it sounds like nice fairy tales. I try not to talk about the negative side so much. Maybe that's not such a good approach because I don't want to disappoint or

discourage them right from the beginning but maybe we should because this is the reality. But it's my reality. Maybe theirs is going to be different. Maybe those people were strange. Maybe their professors will be nicer. I can't generalize from my own personal experience. I can't say that all Americans are like this or like that. But life in general I try to tell them. Don't stand too close to people. Always use phrases like "Excuse me, pardon me" because these are very commonly used there. Don't stare at people. Here (in Turkey) we don't use them like that. I remember at a supermarket, for example, it was a late time and it was almost empty. I heard this man saying "Excuse me" and I looked around and he was a metre away trying to push his cart and for some reason he felt that he was invading my space. I thought it was very unusual. If you're in Turkey, we're always waiting in lines in front of the ATM machines like sardines. Nobody says excuse me. Things like this, I warn them. It's very interesting for them. They want to know more. Take a shower every morning, for example, or at night. Be punctual. Punctuality is very important there. They just listen to it, like a fairy tale. If they are taking notes, some of them are, but the others are just saying ok. Sometimes they ask questions. They are very curious. There are questions related to academic and social life.

There are so many things to say. It's hard to remember things. It's been 2 years now...

## Appendix E

A Sample Coded Page for Question 19a in the Semi-  
structured (E-mailed) Questionnaire

1. American society is oriented towards individual and  
Turkish society is oriented towards the group. SOA-IND
  
2. People here are much more respectful and understanding SOA-RES  
toward each other. / Although they are also much more SOA-INF  
informal, / they keep a certain distance even with their NOF-DIS  
friends. / They obey the rules. / They have less ARU  
expectations from other people, they are SOA-IND  
individualistic and independent.
  
3. In the USA people are more individualistic. / In a SOA-IND  
social environment people are friendly and willing to SOA-SOC  
make friends. / However, it is harder to develop a NOF-DIS  
closer relationship.
  
4. Family bonds and friendship are much stronger in T. / In FAR  
the US they have what is called "individualism". SOA-IND  
Everybody works for and thinks about him/her self.
  
5. American people don't have physical contact. For ex.,  
they don't give a hug or kisses to each other. SOA-NAF